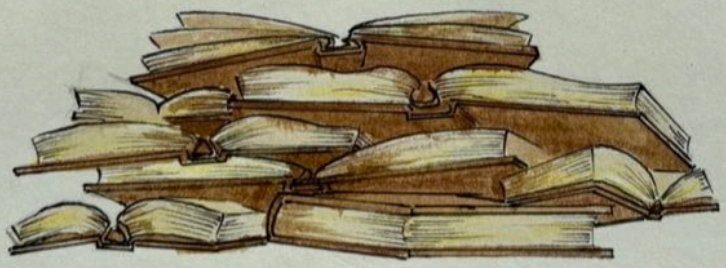
Magister-Auctor Saga



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Lelung Huang

Umut Aydin

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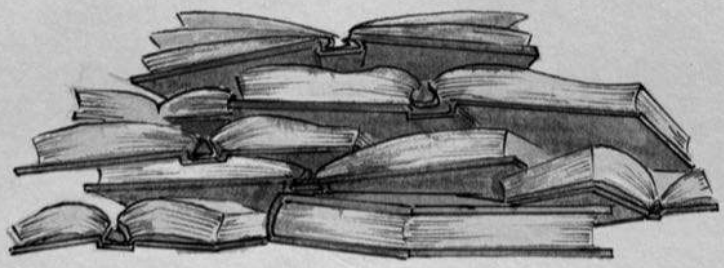

Publications out of control

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To Manuel, Sebastião
en Olívia

Prologue

Lille. It's shortly after noon on January 24, 1733.

Dieudonné returns home accompanied by the midwife who had been recommended to them and whom he had gone to notify in the *Hospital St Jacques*. Mathilde told him an hour earlier that the time had come. Dieudonné opens the door of their cozy home on Rue des Carmes, near the Pont Neuf. You can hear the harbour activity on the Deûle.

Downstairs, the wood crackles in the fireplace. The second cook enters with steamed white linen cloths, still warm and damp. She accompanies the midwife and Dieudonné to the upstairs room, where Mathilde tries to control her contractions with rapid breathing. In between, she groans as a violent contraction throws her off control.

Mathilde and Dieudonné are relieved to see the gentle movements of the two women who have worked together before. Dieudonné stands at the head of the bed and cups Mathilde's forehead. The midwife touches Mathilde's lower abdomen and feels for the opening of her cervix.

She smiles.

"It's your first child, isn't it?" she asks.

Dieudonné knits.

Everything is going well. labour has started and the baby is in a good position. As far as I can tell, I'll be able to get the baby to the breast before sunset.

Dieudonné looks at the sweating Mathilde and nods encouragingly. She closes her eyes to better control her

breathing. He sees her again, as on that first day they met almost three years ago, in the family drawing room where he worked as a preceptor. Her bubbling laugh made him look up. It was as if she had felt him look up, and their eyes had met…

A few months earlier, he had said goodbye to his parents and his sister Maria. His brother Johannes was in Leuven at the time, where he still lives. They try to write to each other regularly, but the bustling pace of life, both here and in Leuven, often prevents them from maintaining their agreed-upon routines.

Through his employers and Mathilde, Dieudonné quickly gained access to the intellectual world of Paris, which was quite different from what he knew in Leiden and Leuven. There, the seriousness of the established thinkers and researchers contrasted sharply with the sometimes cheerful student life, despite many attempts to curb the urge for entertainment.

In Paris, intellectuals seem to combine work and pleasure. Salon ladies succeed in combining music, theatre, poetry, and science into a sometimes rather frivolous whole. The *Duchesse de Maine* is certainly responsible for some of the events. But generally speaking, one senses a kind of zest for life that he had missed, especially in Reformed Christian circles. The frivolous undertone of the salon gatherings often lends an ironic tone to the sometimes serious discussions. This is not comparable to the revelry of student revelry, where the joy of arguing together fades as quickly as the consumption of wine and beer increases. Meanwhile, Mathilde's critical view of all displays of power and wealth serves as his guide to maintaining his own critical thinking. And that proved necessary after what seemed to

happen to him upon his arrival in Paris, where everything contradicted what he had previously been taught about the French.

Together they stirred up some bad blood, mainly through their sometimes sharp interventions when the discussion turned to the education and instruction of the common people. Mathilde's parents knew that some of their regular conversation partners from that time were unwelcome at both the court and in church circles. This is perhaps the second reason why her parents still don't entirely approve of their marriage. But the main reason remains that they believe Dieudonné is far beneath her.

Mathilde and he, on the other hand, felt a very clear affinity in their way of looking at the world on two occasions. They offered a very unanimous and enthusiastic commentary on the framework that Dieudonné's parents developed and sent to them almost two years ago. In it, they analyse the phenomenon of arrogance. That was the first moment.

The second moment occurred last year, after Dieudonné learned from his father that his grandfather Pieter, whom he had never met in person, had died in Frankfurt. With a certain sense of guilt, he finally reviewed the notes from his grandparents' research, and he now regrets never having spoken to his grandfather about it. After reading the notes, he and Mathilde decided to focus primarily on the influence of the religious world on education and instruction. Studying education also made them more aware of the way many researchers and scientists often speak negatively about the children of the common people, as if they were some kind of animal.

Sometimes the discussions became quite heated, and they increasingly felt like unwelcome guests.
So Lille became their new refuge. Dieudonné is now 26 and Mathilde 23. Both are aware of their privileged position as middle-class families. They can devote much of their time to study thanks to a fixed allowance from both Dieudonné's and Mathilde's parents, despite the latter's views on their marriage.

The midwife brings him out of his thoughts.
"One more push and we'll see the little head," she announces.
Dieudonné takes Mathilde by the hands and watches as a distortion appears under the birth skirt. Then the little boy lets out his first cry. A little Lemaître-Larouge is born. For the Larouge-au-Chateâu family, originally from Brittany, it will be Yann, for the *Lesmeister* now also *Lemaître* who, after their departure from Cologne, moved permanently to Ghent the *Diets* of *Flemish* switched over is it Jan.
The little boy seems to have survived the birth surge well. The midwife and the kitchen maid first washed him in lukewarm water, then wrapped him up, and placed him at Mathilde's breast, after she herself had been gently rinsed, following the expulsion of the afterbirth.
Mother and child fall asleep, while Dieudonné invites the kitchen maid and the midwife for a pot of coffee, something which both accept with surprise and shyness.

Shortly Back in time

The years leading up to Dieudonné's decision to move to Paris were turbulent throughout most of Europe as a result of the War of the Spanish Succession. This 12-year economic and social disaster for large segments of the population in Western, Southern, and Central Europe still leaves its mark. Historians rather cynically refer to this conflict between ruling royal houses, hungry for more possessions, as the "Little War". They fail to mention it had been the Great Disaster for cities and villages.

And also for victims of opportunists. During his stay in Leiden, Dieudonné followed the tricks of the clever swindler John Law. Large segments of the French nobility and bourgeoisie are still licking their wounds after the debacle involving the securities issued by Law's bank in 1720. Law had, after all, developed a system to cover the debt of the French king, who considered himself the French State. By the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1714, this debt had risen to 2800 million pounds, the equivalent of ten years' revenues of the State. The creditors were mainly foragers.

John Law gained the trust of the French Regent and established his bank on Rue Vivienne. The bank's capital was secured by his monopoly on future revenues from the Mississippi colonies. Law settled the area with both white and black people to boost agricultural production and increase income. In 1717, he thus succeeded in reducing part of the debt by 60 million pounds. Given the total sum of 2,800 million pounds, this was, of course,

just a drop in the ocean.

Yet Law continued to defend the paper money issued by his bank, which replaced metallic money. He claimed that the wealth France extracted from its colonies was virtually unlimited. At that point, only the Regent was won over by these arguments. Other statesmen and the city parliamentarians of Paris were only moderately enthusiastic. Shortly afterward, Law's General Bank was granted the status of a royal bank. The king himself guaranteed the paper money issued by the bank. Very soon, the State's entire foreign trade came under the management of a single institution, headed by a single man. This institution also dominated speculation in securities.

In 1720, the whole thing collapsed. At the first signs of distrust, John Law couldn't prevent many French people from preferring to save their wealth at home in the form of metal money and gold coins, rather than investing it in paper money and stocks. When, that same year, prominent figures like the Prince of Conti and the Duke of Bourbon cashed in their paper money, all hell broke loose.

The Paris-brothers now appear. During the War of Succession, they enriched themselves by trading in munitions, and with their profits, they had already established a bank. They ensured the eventual liquidation of the Law system. They also provided a visa for compensation for those who had acted in good faith and heavy fines for those who had clearly speculated. After the visa for shares became legal, all shareholders were required to have their shares examined and stamped if they were eligible. During 1721, a visa commission headed by the Paris-brothers dealt with

the entire matter. All in all, approximately 10% of the French population appeared to have been victims of John Law's system. The Kingdom's debt was reduced to 1,700 million pounds, thanks in part to the fines levied. A small group of 185 speculators faced a total of 187 million pounds in fines. The biggest victims were found among depositors between £500 and £10,000. A total of 300,000 security holders lost a considerable amount to the system. All holders of up to £400 were fully compensated. The less affluent citizens suffered little punishment as a result of the system's collapse. But confidence in securities, especially among the French aristocracy and upper middle class, would only slowly return in the future.

Meanwhile things go well *Belgium Austriacum*. The Ostend Company plays a significant role in this. Although the intrigues of traders and administrators from neighbouring states constantly threaten the charter granted by Emperor Charles VI, the signatories of the shares are very satisfied-

The Lesmeister family has its own nest egg. John, a native of Ghent and Ostend, was fortunate enough to be able to invest in the Company after a subscriber from Amsterdam decided to play it safe. France and the Northern Provinces almost immediately imposed heavy fines on their citizens who supported the Ostend Company in any way.

In the years leading up to the patent, shipowners increasingly competed with each other for private withdrawal. Profit margins, which had previously been quite high, began to shrink. The patent that officially granted the Company and the very rapid subscription of its entire capital reversed this trend.

Between 1724 and 1728, the Ostend Company became the leading importer of tea to Western Europe. Sixty percent of all European tea imports passed through the markets of Ostend and Bruges. During this period, a total of 16 ships returned. In 1724, these were the *Empress Elisabeth*, captained by Balthazar Rose, and *the Arend*, captained by Nicolaas Carpentier. In 1725, the *Karel VI*, captained by Jacques De Winter, returned from Bengal, while the *Empress*, captained by Jan de Clerck, and the *Markgraef De Prié*, commanded by Andreas Flanderinq, returned from China. In 1726, the *Gouden Leeuw* (Golden Lion) and the *Tyger* (Tyger) completed a voyage to China under the command of Captains Jacques Larmes and Michael Pronchaert. Then came *the Vrede* (Peace) and *the Hope*, captained by Philips Perrenot and Nicolaas Carpentier, arriving from Bengal. Over the next two years, the port receives the *Archduchess*, the *Karel VI*, the *Concordia*, the *Markgraef de Prié,* the *Saint Antonius of Padua*, the *Saint Anna* and the *Saint Joseph*, with the captains Michael Cayphas, Laureins Meyne, Reingoet, Guilherme De Brouwer, Joannes De Brakel, Matthias Clinckaert and Daniel Peters.
During that period, thanks to the widening of the waterway, seagoing vessels could sail directly from Ostend to Bruges.

Since the Lesmeister family moved to Ostend, Dieudonné's father, John, had become acquainted with several supercargos, the merchants who sailed along with the ships and, like the captains, were entitled to private cargo. John had cautiously invested in some of the cargoes handled by Arnold Hoys and Pieter van Heurck. He knew the latter from his earlier days, when he was still a surgeon before becoming second

supercargo.
From his father, Dieudonné learned how profitable the China trade was for the Ostend Company and therefore also for its shareholders. Ships from Bengal yielded a much more modest return. But the tea yielded a gross profit of no less than 400% over two years. Generally, the invested capital yielded an annual return of 70%.
More than enough reason for other companies sailing to the Indies and China to target the young Ostend Company.
Wherever possible, restrictions were imposed abroad that were costly for the Company. Front men had to be employed to acquire ships, as no foreign shipyard was allowed to supply Ostend directly. For example, the *Tyger* was purchased in Amsterdam for 24,000 guilders, only to be immediately resold through two intermediaries for 54,000 guilders.
Of course, the ships of the Ostend Company, like any other ship, were potential targets for pirates and buccaneers. Captain Joseph de Gheselle could certainly attest to this. The merchant ship Keyserinne Elisabeth, under his command, was rammed by two Algerian pirate ships on May 29, 1724. The surviving crew members of the hand-to-hand combat were sold as slaves, while the loot was sold at the local market. Only two years later, thanks to the intervention of the Bishop of Bruges and the Emperor's permission, a collection could be taken to ransom Gheselle and his men.
The Ostend crew, including Antoine Pieters and Jean Ingelet, also headed home.
Both men later recount their experiences to John and

Dieudonné. They are particularly indignant that they themselves were sold as slaves in an Algerian market. During a stopover in the Cape Verde Islands, they had closely witnessed the slave trade of Black people up. They were convinced at the time that slaves were little more than godless savages, usually traded by the Portuguese, French, or merchants from the United Provinces. They had, however, noticed that many Black women were kept behind to serve and satisfy the local traders who were short of women. Weaker captives were also disembarked there to be used as slaves themselves. The traders preferred not to risk seeing them die during the voyage to the New World and thus end up in financial trouble.

Both men say they simply don't understand how they themselves could become slaves. They are not savages, but devout believers whose only misfortune was being attacked by pirates. Once captured, they were forced to dig clay under the hot sun. They were employed by master builders to build wooden scaffolding and climb it with heavy buckets. They lost several of their comrades when they fell from one scaffolding. They show their scars, the result of beatings, especially in the first weeks after their capture.

Dieudonné is struck by how they take it for granted that black people are savages and godless and therefore destined for slavery, while this is apparently a grave insult to devout white people. John tells him that his father and grandfather often discussed with Claudius Cardinalis the narrow view of European white people on culture and social forms. He recounts Claudius' growing doubts about the erratic policies of successive popes

regarding the ban on slavery. This ultimately led him to resign his episcopal position. John also recalls the long history of religious and cultural intolerance and arrogance that has made slavery a widespread phenomenon. The land- and profit-hungry European aristocrats trivialise the phenomenon of the slave trade, labelling unbelievers as primitives. He gives Dieudonné the writings of Zera Jacob, which came to his Ostend library, and shares what he remembers about the story of the grandson of King Ngola Hari of Ndongo, which his father once mentioned. After all, he had succeeded in persuading the church leaders to take a stand regarding the extermination of the Brazilian Indians and the importation of black slaves. He promised Dieudonné to write to his father about it to refresh his memory.

In Leuven, Dieudonné not only focused on further philosophical studies, but also on mastering the French language. It seems an irreversible phenomenon. Latin is increasingly confined to the ecclesiastical sphere and specific scholarly work. The dominant European nation is searching for a new common language of high-level administration. French quickly emerged as such. Although English, Spanish, Portuguese, and High German are widely used languages in Europe and its colonies, French dominates the culture today. You could say that French, along with Arabic and Sanskrit, is now a kind of world language. Both in *Belgium Fœderatum* as in *Belgium Austriacum* the lower authorities, however, continue to use Low German, Dutch and Flemish.
Nevertheless, more scholarly publications in the vernacular emerged, partly due to the growing number of literate people.

Quite quickly, the many Huguenot and other French exiles considered their language a kind of " natural" successor to Latin. For example, Jacques Basnage published his official history of the Low Countries in French in 1719. Around the same time, Bayle wrote that Latin was the language of a small group of scholars and that everyone here wanted to speak French. Publishing scholarly work in Low German seemed utterly improbable to him.

Education and language learning remain passions of the Lesmeister family. In the final days before his departure for Paris, Dieudonné, his parents, and his nineteen-year-old sister review the information they had gathered over the past few years.
John and Marianne bring up their correspondence with grandfather Pieter. Maria has involved Dieudonné in her regular visits to the highly driven 24-year-old Begga de Bruges. Maria and Begga assist Marianne in completing the unfinished research on her deceased mother-in-law, Henriette
"If I understand my grandfather's reasoning correctly, he is saying that Démia and Locke introduced the idea that the school of the poor should be different from the school for the wealthy," says Dieudonné.
"Your grandfather, and especially my grandfather, had high expectations for Locke's work. Your grandfather Pieter was quite disappointed by Locke's treatise on education, even though the philosopher was probably familiar with the work of Comenius. According to my father, Locke bears a greater responsibility for spreading that idea because he is better known than Démia," John replies.

“I read some diaries that Grandfather sent to Father, as a contribution to his and Mother’s research. His criticism of Démia actually presupposes his criticism of granting privileges to those who already have them,” says Maria.
“Your grandfather first heard about Démia’s ideas in the 90s. He was clearly alarmed by the blatant division between the education of the children of the poor and that of the upper classes. Even then, he said that the poor school was fertile ground for religious orders involved in education,” John notes.
“Begga often talks about what she calls the Jesuits’ ambiguous attitude towards education. I was reminded of this again when my father showed me his letter to my grandfather in which he describes *Conduct of Christian Schools*. “If I’m not mistaken, your attitude is pretty much the same as Begga’s,” Maria says, looking at her father.
Interested, Dieudonné picks up Pieter’s diaries about Démia and Lasalle. “I really should read these notes more carefully,” he says. “I was of the opinion that more schools led by the Jesuits, known for their erudition, were a good thing. And now you’re saying this is about a radical separation between those with money and power and those without.”
“Jean-Baptiste de La Salle made his guidelines *Conduct of Christian Schools* known in 1706. Since then, schools for the poor have been increasing. Louis XIV introduced a kind of general compulsory schooling in France with guidelines on what had to be taught. This was mainly an attempt to get a handle on home education among the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. He believed that this would help to prevent the spread of the

Reformation. But in doing so, he also laid the foundation for a further establishment of schools for the poor in all French cities, and many city administrators look with favor on the *Christian Schools*.

"As Démia said, she keeps the vagabonds off the streets and discipline and Catholic catechism are assured," John continues.

"But I thought the Jesuits were more interested in the Colleges, the Athenaeum and the university," says Dieudonné.

"That's true. But that doesn't change the fact that they also see it as their mission to win young people over to the church. In the Little School, more drastic disciplinary rules can be enforced than in the Grammar Schools. When young children come from poor families, they are easily subdued by a system of punishment and reward. Your father compiled a list of its uses," says Marianne.

"What I learned in Leuven," says Dieudonné, "is that the society does not have a uniform *Ratio Studiorum* continues for all regions where they establish colleges and grammar schools. Here in Flanders there was an *Instructio pro Scholis*, today that is the *Ordo Domesticus*. Ultimately it comes down to the fact that there can be a kind of separate regulation for a group of grammar schools in a particular region. The *Ordo Domesticus* is in force in the whole *Provincia of Flanders-Belgica*.

These regulations are somewhat more flexible for humanities classes than in other regions. However, colleges remain closed to girls, and access is very limited for working-class boys. The relaxation has more to do with the content of the *classis humanitatis* and that of *rhetorica*. There are also some

deviations from other regions in the rules regarding female roles in plays. Following the previous *Instructio pro Scholis* they are permitted if they are necessary for religious history. Boys play the roles. All humanities classes are allowed to perform plays here. The students of the *rhetorica* occur at the beginning of the calendar year, the *poësis* during the first week of Lent and the other classes between April and July. In the *Provincia Flanders-Belgica* actors from different classes are allowed to participate in the performance at the end of the school year. In deviation from previous rules, today dancing or *tripudia* are allowed during the end-of-year performances."

"Ha," laughs Maria, "the moral guardians of the Catholic Church have lost that battle after all. They tried for as long as possible to prove that dancing is devilish, but here, secular life has finally gained the upper hand."

Dieudonné clarifies: "What I was told is that, although permitted, dancing is better left out. Furthermore, no member of the Order is allowed to teach it. Dancing is recognised as a praiseworthy spectacle. Classic hypocrisy and ambiguity, then."

"We can, of course, ask ourselves what the true purpose is of the increasing education in the hands of religious orders and organisations almost everywhere, especially if we follow the humanist desire to make knowledge and science available to everyone, rich and poor, men and women," Marianne begins.

Dieudonné and Maria nod their heads vigorously in agreement with their mother. They express a desire to discuss this, but John says, "We'll have time to discuss this further later, but perhaps we should focus on what we're eating today. Dieudonné is

leaving soon, and there won't be much fresh seafood in Paris. What do you think?"

The Lesmeister family isn't the typical bourgeois family. They don't have live-in servants or maids. They employ a cook who prepares meals daily. However, John or Marianne often go out to buy fish and vegetables themselves. Cleaning staff comes to the house. Laundresses regularly pick up and return linens and clothing.

A few weeks ago, Marianne, John, and Dieudonné packed two large leather suitcases. They have already been sent to Paris. The Sun King's educational guidelines do not prevent aristocratic families and dignitaries from retaining private tutors, especially not fifteen years after the death of the absolute monarch. Just before Dieudonné left Leuven and returned to Ostend, he was approached by one of his professors. He asked if he would be interested in the position of preceptor with his brother in Paris. He could take up residence as a live-in teacher in the *Hôtel* of the family and earn an annual salary equivalent to 100 Flemish pounds. The family's *Hôtel* is located on Place Royal. This isn't exactly near the Sorbonne, but in one of Paris' noble districts. Dieudonné sees this position as an opportunity to become more acquainted with the French interpretation of Enlightenment ideas he encountered in Leiden and Leuven. It's also a good opportunity to become better acquainted with French culture. The inviting professor points out that young philosophers and scientists often find patrons among the French aristocracy, making it possible to pursue their studies. With this, he dispels the young man's last remaining doubts. Dieudonné is drawn to

this new adventure.

Father and son walk to the rather busy fishing boat dock. It's high tide, and the coastal vessels are returning to the fishing harbour. They easily find Pieter Janszoon's boat.

"Hey Pieter," John greets the burly man with a tanned face who's just come ashore. "What are you recommending us for today?"

"I have everything you need for a rich fish soup," Pieter assures them. "I'll make you a selection you'll love."

John pulls out his wallet and pays a generous 1 guilder. That's 2 *stuivers* more than the 18 Pieter asks for the fish.

As they walk back to Kaaistraat, they run into Jean Ingelet. He can't resist teasing Dieudonné about his upcoming trip to Paris. "The French are tricking us and the Company. They're always on the lookout, keeping our ships from sailing past their coasts. And now you're going to bow down to such a rich Frenchman."

"I am not going to bow down, Jean. I am going to show French children how much bigger the world is than the French Empire of Louis and the Austrian Empire with *Belgium Austria.* Perhaps I can tell them one of your exciting stories in between. And talk about the Black slave people who are treated so horribly by all the Companies."

Jean's mouth, with its badly battered teeth, curls into a sad smile: "We've already talked about this, Dieudonné. Now I know what it means to be subjected to someone else's whip. I was beaten by those terrible Arabs. And the Blacks who were by my side got beaten even more. Praise God. He watched over me as the good Christian that I am. He saw to it that I was redeemed.

Why don't the Blacks want to be baptised? Then God would have mercy on them too."

"It's not that simple, Jean," John interjects. "I've read stories from missionaries, Dominicans, and Jesuits, who write to Rome and testify that even in Christian environment converted black people aren't freed from slavery, even though that's what they're usually promised."

"Nothing was promised to me, a devout Christian, John. I only know that God bent over me and sent a signal to the Bishop of Bruges to ensure that the fundraising effort to ransom us began."

"Perhaps the signal wasn't fully understood," Dieudonné sneers.

"My idea of God is that He has mercy on all who suffer. But some who claim to spread His word apparently think differently. And in the end, it's all about human trafficking. Even redemption is a comercial purchase."

John looks at his son: "According to those who receive His signals, God can only be understood by those who adhere to the true faith. The Catholic Church claims that Jean's former owners are unbelievers or, even worse, adherents of a false faith. According to that same church, such blunderers would, of course, never understand God's signal. That's why God needs a helping hand with money. The church leaders can further claim not to be responsible for the pagan companions of Jean and our other Ostend friends. Only conversion could help. And even then. Would our local church leaders advocate for converted Black people who are not from our region? Who are not crew members of the Ostend Company? The reports I just mentioned

confirm that both Reformed and Catholic Christian overseas landowners do not free their converted Black slaves as expected."

Jean listens attentively and then says "I don't really know, John. Maybe it has something to do with punishment and atonement. Here, in our country, convicts are often forced to work. Isn't that also being a slave? The Arabs said we were slaves. And that was our punishment, they said, because, according to them, we invoked the wrong God. Maybe black people should be punished because they simply don't invoke God? Or maybe those I saw there were captured after a war. Maybe they're simply slaves because they're prisoners?"

"Well, perhaps you're right," John agrees. "I need to think about this. And now we're going to take that fish to the kitchen. Otherwise, there won't be any fish soup. We'll see you soon, Jean."

Father and son continue walking.

"Do you really think prisoners should be treated like slaves, Father?" Dieudonné asks in surprise.

"No, son, I think nobody has the right to enslave anyone else. I remember texts by Claudius, in which he showed that someone who wields power bases it partly or entirely on the labour of others. And that labour is more often unpaid than paid. But I have to think about how I can explain that to Jean without hurting his feelings or beliefs. Jean clearly feels a certain compassion for the fate of others living under the conditions he himself endured during his two-year captivity. He's looking for an explanation he can live with for why he's freed and his fellow

Black men are not. You can't blame him for that. I think the evil lies elsewhere. And the worst part is that we ourselves are victims of it and partly responsible for it."
"What do you mean, Father?"
Ultimately, we live off the proceeds of other people's labour, and I don't mean just the proceeds of our own. Our own labour is paid for by those who live off the proceeds of other people's labour. That was true for my grandfather, that was true for my father, that is largely my case, and that will be true for you too when you receive income from the people whose children you will raise and teach. In my opinion, the evil lies in owning things. But I can't imagine how it could be otherwise. In the propertyless world of Thomas More, all families have two slaves. Is that possible, a world without property? Early Christians and some ascetics say so. But do they find joy in not owning things, or do they consider 'propertylessness' simply a path to eternal rest and peace? An interesting philosophical problem for you.

This brief conversation with his father would have consequences for all of Dieudonné's subsequent thinking on education and upbringing. It would also stimulate his critical reflections on opening schools to all children.
Now he wants to talk to Maria about it first. Ever since she introduced him to Begga de Bruges, he's harboured enormous admiration for her sharp intellect. Begga has made him realize that in the sphere of property and power, women occupy much the same place as slaves. Men restrict her freedom; they are not allowed or able to develop intellectually unless they manage to escape the social straitjacket into which they are forced. Begga

was still very young when she explained to Dieudonné's mother that living and working in the beguinage of Bruges had been her solution to escape that straitjacket. In addition to the social duties she takes on, she has free time to study. She doesn't have the means to buy her freedom, as the aristocratic female acquaintances of Dieudonné's grandmother and mother could. She also points out that their own family views the complementarity between men and women much like Zera Yacob. "But," she adds, "you mustn't forget that since Wolfgang's father, you have had incomes that largely free you from backbreaking menial work."

Along with Dieudonné and Maria, Begga reads the texts of Henriette Waldbaum and Marianne Grünen. They wrote extensive biographical notes on women. They talk about Tapputi-Belatekallim, Maria of Alexandria, and Hypatia of Alexandria. They describe the Pythagorean school of antiquity, in which women also participated. There is, among other things, a text on the work of Aglaonike and Theano. There is an extensive note on the philosopher and botanist Hildegarde of Bingen and the writer Hroswitha von Gandersheim. Henriette and Marianne devoted considerable attention to the University of Bologna. As far as women were concerned, that high school was and has long been an outlier. Bologna was home to Trocta of Salerno and Dorothea Bucca, who made important contributions to the fields of medicine and philosophy. They were not alone. Together with other women, they prove that Thomas Aquinas was completely wrong when he claimed that women were incapable of reasoning and that it was therefore

pointless to grant them access to knowledge and instruction.
Naturally, Henriette wrote extensively about her contemporaries Anna Maria van Schurman, Anna Maria Sibylla Merian, Margaret Cavendish, and Maria Margarethe Winckelmann. She maintained a lively correspondence with the first two throughout her life.

A few days later, Dieudonné speaks to his mother again about what Begga showed him.
"Begga has enormous appreciation for what Grandmother and yourself put together and published in small booklets at our family's house in Frankfurt," Dieudonné begins. "She recently mentioned your study of the anonymous work *De l'égalité des deux sexes, discours physique et moral, où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des Préjugés [On the equality of the two sexes, physical and moral discourse, where we see the importance of getting rid of Prejudices*.]That was new to me."
"It is a study that I started to analyse with your grandmother. The writing about it remained unfinished. I recently suggested to Begga to resume that study. Not long ago we learned that the *Discours* probably comes from François Poullain de La Barre. He died five years ago in Geneva.
"Why did you think the book was worth analysing?" asks Dieudonné.
We especially wanted to understand how women are discussed. Equality is a peculiar concept. Of course, men and women are not biologically equal. There's no point in claiming otherwise. As is often the case with other concepts, inequality is linked to a hierarchy. And sometimes, those who prioritise equality simply

want to erase hierarchy. The simplest approach is to pretend that everyone is initially offered the same thing but reacts differently. These different reactions would then indicate a kind of 'natural' inferiority of one group compared to another.

"And how does François Poullain presumably tackle this issue?"

"Well, to begin with he says, "*Indeed, the ideas of natural things are necessary, and are always formed in us in the same way. Adam had them as we have them; children have them as old people do, and women as men do; and these ideas are renewed, strengthened, and maintained by the continual use of the senses. The mind is always acting; and whoever knows well how it acts in one thing, discovers without difficulty how it acts in all others. There is only a plus and a minus between the impression of the Sun and that of a spark. To think well on this subject, one needs neither skill nor physical exercise.*" So, to begin with, cognitive function is not dependent on body morphology. There is no difference between women and men, young and old.

But then François Poullain continues. He had previously discussed the women's manual dexterity and now says: "*It is not the same with the works of which I have spoken. One must apply one's mind even more: ideas, being arbitrary, are more difficult to grasp and to retain; what is the reason why it takes so much time to know a trade well is that it depends on long practice: one needs skill to keep the proportions on a canvas, to distribute the silk or wool equally, to mix the colours accurately; to not tighten or loosen the stitches too much, to not put more in one row than in the other; to make the imperceptible nuances: in a word, one must know how to make and vary the works of art in a thousand*

different ways to be skilled in them; whereas in the sciences one must only look in order at ready-made and always uniform works: and all the difficulty of succeeding there comes less from the objects and the disposition of the body, than from the lack of capacity in the Masters." That is of course a dangerous argument, because it could point to a different kind of intelligence in women and in men."

"Yes, I can see that. And how does François continue his reasoning?" asks Dieudonné.

He himself says that these are not decisive arguments for getting rid of the ingrained prejudices regarding people in general and women in particular, who are initially kept from education and later considered naturally inferior. He tries to adhere to strict philosophical rules in his speech: the mind is not assigned to a sex, only the a body. It is not physical sex that determines the mind, but its formation. Both the mind of the brute, uneducated adult and that of the small human being need education. God has connected the mind to the body of the man as well as to the woman. Consider the head as the seat of the mind and observe that the woman's brain looks exactly the same as the man's brain. Consider their senses and see that they function in exactly the same way.

François Poullain then alludes, perhaps, to the women of Bologna who trained in medicine and obstetrics. He says: "*Women and men in medicine dissect bodies or observe dissections in the same way*." He also considers other forms of mental stimulation when he claims that through meditation and guidance from a Master, women develop logical thinking just as

well as anyone who meditates and has a Master. He was perhaps even more knowledgeable than we are about educated women in earlier eras. He says, after all, that in both mathematics and astronomy, women and men possess the same powers of observation."

"So he's basically saying that there's no essential methodological difference for any science, which means that different intelligences aren't needed for different sciences?"

Yes, and then he argues that nature shouldn't be confused with habits. There's no such thing as a predisposition for intelligence, but rather a need for education and training because of all the individuals who were created with intelligence. He writes: '*The simplest and most natural use that one can make in public of the sciences that one has learned well is to teach them to others: and if women had studied in Universities, with men, or in those that would have been established for them in particular, they could enter the degrees, and take the title of Doctor and Master in Theology and Medicine, our in both: and their genius which disposes them so advantageously to learn, would also dispose them to teach successfully. They would find methods and insinuating biases to inspire their doctrine; they would skilfully discover the strengths and weaknesses of their disciples, to proportion themselves to their scope, and the facility that they have in expressing themselves, and which is one of the most excellent talents of good Masters, would complete the task of making them admirable Mistresses*.' That seems clearer to me than the allusion to the necessary intelligence for specific craft activities. François Poullain goes even further, and like Zera Yacob before him, he

writes that God willed that humans multiply through the union of a man and a woman. Since God intended perfect beings, there is no cogent argument that women are less perfect than men.

"So it is clear to François Poullain that one cannot first advocate different basic education and instruction and then claim that certain people, especially women, are suited for fewer activities," Dieudonné suggests.

"That seems like a fair deduction to me, yes. Of course, only women carry unborn children within them. Because they are anchored to the childbed for a certain period of time at each birth, they naturally interrupt their intellectual work, in a sense, while men don't have to. This leads to some women who are grateful for the privilege of carrying unborn children and caring for infants. Begga de Bruges has two books she likes to talk about. The first is *Traité de la morale e de la Politique divisé en Trois parties*, written by G. S. Aristophile, who many now know is a pseudonym for Gabrielle Suchon. In 1700, she published another book under her own name: *Du célibat volontaire, ou La vie sans engagement*. Begga very often points to the following passage from the introduction: '*And since by the bonds of marriage women are subject to their husbands, attached to their children, worried by their domestics, and by the care of acquiring temporal goods, which are such annoying thorns, that it is difficult to understand the pains and labours: I make known the happiness of free people, who are exempt from so many sorrows*.'

Begga read this book when she was sixteen and claims it was decisive in her desire to become a beguine and be free from

maternal and matrimonial responsibilities. Feel free to ask her about it; she's happy to talk about Gabrielle Suchon.

The evening before his departure, Dieudonné had another conversation with Maria and his parents about the influence of religion on the education and education of women and men.
"It's clear to us that there's a bias against educating women. As Begga often notes, it's an unbreakable circular argument: men claim that women are intellectually less capable. This leads them to declare that educating them is therefore pointless. Without education, women can hardly keep up with current knowledge and science. This inability to keep up is then the main argument for the claim that women are less intellectually capable," says Marianne.
"It's actually a far-reaching form of misogyny," Maria believes. "And since the Reformation in the Christian world, the number of misogynists seems to have increased even more."
"Isn't that related to the fact that it is mainly men who study Holy Scripture and always find indications that women are inferior to men?" asks Dieudonné.
"Your grandfather and Claudius often discussed this," John begins. "They noted that not only in the Christian canon but in all the scriptures they consulted, women are discussed in as contradictory and vague a manner as slaves."
"Almost all texts, from all religions we know, are at least ambiguous when it comes to women. You could also point out, of course, that it's men who claim to have heard and recorded the divine message in the religions we know better: those of the Christians in their various forms, those of the Jews, and those of

the Muslims, or Mohammedans as they call themselves," Marianne adds. “And misogyny isn’t new. Some classical authors equate women with men, but many subordinate women to men. But as far as we know from the texts we were able to consult, women were not, as is the case today, systematically excluded from education and training where such opportunities existed. In both the Christian Reformed and non-Reformed regions, you see how women are systematically excluded from education and training. Even if in Europe women from the nobility can play an important role as governors, that doesn’t mean women are easily included in study groups.”

“What we know from the travel stories of those who have had contact with the Muslim world, with the East Indies and with China is that subordinating women to men is also a systemic phenomenon there,” John adds.

Dieudonné looks at his sister and says: “I would like to learn more about how education and the dissemination of knowledge takes place in the past and present among all people, the poor and the wealthy, the nobility and the bourgeoisie, craftsmen, foot soldiers, serfs and slaves, but also about the dissemination of knowledge *by* and *among* women and men. Would you like to participate in this, with the help of Begga, but also of our parents?

Maria nods. “Yes, very much so. As a woman, I experience firsthand how I’m forbidden to do what you were allowed to do: study in Leiden or Leuven, for example. As far as I know from Begga, I’d have to go to Bologna to be able to attend university courses and even teach there without any underhanded

manoeuvring."
"It is rather frightening that so many men present themselves as cosmopolitan but exclude women, slaves and black people from that cosmopolitanism," Dieudonné notes.
"Yes. Can a misogynist even be cosmopolitan? Are all those religious orders so eager to establish boys' schools afraid of women, or do they hate them? How should the Jesuit guidelines be interpreted? We've already discussed school organisation and the staging of plays. But the rule also states that it's not advisable to allow women into their houses or colleges, only into their churches. They do make an exception for major benefactors. Fear of women or misogyny with a dose of hypocrisy on top? Begga claims hypocrisy is their seal," says Maria.
Your grandfather often had a hard time assessing his acquaintances among the members of the Society of Jesus. He said he couldn't understand how some of his very intelligent friends, on the one hand, presented themselves as cosmopolitans, yet on the other, believed that secular books didn't belong in their homes because they would only please their vanity. But isn't a cosmopolitan precisely someone who looks at objects, texts, and cultural expressions with an open mind, regardless of the scale of values they impose on themselves? Father couldn't imagine that his Cologne friends from the Society would have so little self-confidence that a secular book, a musical instrument, or a deck of cards would make them question their chosen lifestyle, John reminds them.
"Well," says Maria somewhat mischievously, "in the end, those

friends were just men too. Men who, while having no doubts about the dogma they defend, still feel insecure about their own will to stay away from anything that might appeal to them. And rather than face the temptation, they try to shut it out. Perhaps not very scientific and investigative, but safer and easier."

Dieudonné rises from his armchair. Tomorrow he's traveling to Paris. He kisses his parents goodnight and hugs his sister. They can't imagine that it will be the last time they spend an evening together. Dieudonné will see Maria only once after his parents' death. He recently turned twenty-three.

The Judgment of Paris.

First impressions

Dear people there in Ostend,

How can I describe your 'Paris'? The city is vast, with both wide avenues and long, narrow streets. Grand squares alternate with alleyways, dirty, and dark corners. I'm perfectly located on Place Royal, in the Hôtel rented by the Saffres-de-Montbard family, whose children I'm caring for. From my rooms on the top floor, I can see the Hôtel de la Reine on one side of this beautiful square, across from Rue Royal. So I'm on the east side of Paris-Ville, a short distance from the Bastille. Sieur Aruet, known today as Voltaire, saw the interior of it shortly before he went into exile in London for two years. Stories goes he insulted an arrogant aristocrat after a discussion about the attentions of comedienne Adrienne Lecouvreur. The woman in question died a few weeks ago at a young age. I learned about the whole story when I was visiting the Hôtel de Sully nearby with the Saffres-de-Montbard family. While the aristocracy does allow writers and natural philosophers to frequent their salons, class solidarity always carries more weight. Sieur Voltaire was ultimately forced to resign due to a lack of support from both the Duque de Sully and the Prince de Conti after his confrontation with Guy Auguste de Rohan-Chabot. The Prince learned that Sieur Voltaire had been beaten by Chabot's lackeys and only said that it was about "well received but poorly delivered blows" *Apparently, Sieur Voltaire's 'tendresse' for Adrienne Lecouvreur didn't disappear with those blows. Upon his return from London, he had an affair with her. Furthermore, a*

rumor circulates that the 35-year-old Adrienne was poisoned on the orders of the Duchess of Bouillon because of another love affair. An autopsy at Voltaire's request was inconclusive. Subsequently, the Church refused her a Christian burial because actresses were still subject to excommunication. She was hastily buried by friends of the Marshal de Saxe and Voltaire. Voltaire expressed his outrage in a poem dedicated to her:

Et dans un champ profane on jette à l'aventure
De ce corps si chéri les restes immortels!
Dieux! Pourquoi mon pays n'est-il plus la patrie
Et de la gloire et des talents?

So, I'm staying in Paris-Ville. The river and Isle Nôtre Dame are about a ten-minute walk away. Next to it is Isle du Palais. You can cross these islands and a couple of bridges to Paris-Université without getting your feet too wet. But you often have to navigate dense crowds. And the smell! Moreover, many streets are extremely dangerous. The fiacres with their galloping horses make the streets unsafe. These small carriages are everywhere, and the drivers are often rude. And drivers employed by owners with their own vehicles rarely bother about who's walking through the streets.

The Faubourg Saint-Michel and the Faubourg Saint-Victor, south and east of Paris-Université, lie within the city walls. The Faubourg Saint-Marceau, Saint-Antoine, du Temple, Saint-Denis, Saint-Martin, Montmartre, Saint-Honoré, and Saint-Germain-des-Prés are only partially within these walls. Some of these Faubourgs are filthy, squalid pockets of poverty that contrast sharply with the urban expansions desired by the aristocracy. Currently, Saint-Germain, next to the Hôtel Royal des Invalides, is particularly

fashionable.

I'm told that around five hundred thousand people live in the city today. As I mentioned, a large portion of the population lives miserably in dark houses up to six stories high. Drinking water is almost impossible to find and is sold by water carriers. Despite the ban, many people still draw water from the river. Although, water... Even a horse must have reservations about the color and taste of the river. It's perfectly clear why those with the means prefer to build on the outskirts of the city. There's room for private gardens, springs, and well water. I'm glad that the garden on Place Royal is freely accessible to residents, and that the hotel has plenty of fresh water.

The Sorbonne seems less prestigious to me these days. I understand why many philosophers and natural philosophers move elsewhere. Of what your grandfather Wolfgang once told you about the University of Paris, father, not much remains. There are only thirty colleges left. In fact, one can only study theology and canon law. No, the Sorbonne cannot be compared to Leiden, not even to Leuven. Not even to some of the great Prussian institutions or universities in the British Empire. Comparing it to Bologna is simply impossible.

From Nobleman Saffres-de-Montbard, I hear that Joseph Pâris Duvernay, who helped patch up the mess resulting from the Law fraud, is having his own hôtel built on Rue Saint Antoine, not far from here. Others who benefited from solving this fraud case are François-Marie Fargés, but especially Abraham Peyrenc. He cleverly worked his way into the Fargés family and has now become an extremely wealthy banker. Many stories circulate about him, not

least about the even more luxurious hôtel he built on Rue de Varenne.

Although the suffering of fraud is far from over and the French Empire has become severely impoverished, monetary affairs were restored. A mark of 8 ounces of gold is now equivalent to just over 740 pounds. 8 ounces of silver are equivalent to just over 51 pounds. Today, a Louis d'Or is worth 24 pounds and a silver écu is worth 6 pounds. Note that the pound is merely paper. There are no pound coins in circulation. For two Flemish pounds or 12 of our guilders, you get one Louis d'Or. For most Parisians, guilders and pounds are a mirage, but bankers and the high aristocracy speaks of tens of thousands of pounds as if it were nothing.

Dear people, I've already said it, I'm fine. But I view the vast throng of people here with mixed feelings. Paris, they say, is bigger than London. I can't shake the uneasy feeling that such a crowd also creates a great deal of tension. Just as in Amsterdam and other large cities, the aristocracy and wealthy citizens do something to keep tempers in check, but perhaps not enough. Regrattiers *collect the leftovers from the rich tables and resell them. Those fortunate enough to live indoor with a wealthy family generally fare somewhat better than those who occupy a one- or two-room apartment on a narrow street above the workshop or shop of a craftsman or salesman. No café, theatre, or promenade is for them. No salon afternoons either. Can more education alone be a solution here, Father? Or is this another problem of money, power, and arrogance? And what about the education of compassion for the sons and daughters of the aristocracy?*

Your loving son.

Dieudonné quickly forms an initial impression of the contrasts between rich and poor in the densely populated city, but many things escape him. He doesn't know that eight out of ten homes lack sanitary facilities. Drainage to a cesspool is almost non-existent, both in Paris-city as in Paris-University. While the central market does offer a daily supply of fresh fruits and vegetables from several thousand farmers, and fresh meat and fish are also available daily, most Parisians have no use for these. Their meals consist of bread, some home-grown or less fresh vegetables, and cheese.
The drinking water sold by water carriers is scarce and not always of good quality. This makes wine and eau-de-vie increasingly popular. More and more *guinguettes* pop up outside the city limits. A pint of wine is much cheaper there than within the city gates due to the difference in taxes levied.
Bottled wine is available for purchase for those who can afford it. Over the past decade, the growing glass industry has led to significant deforestation. Glassworks require charcoal, which drives up the price of wood for domestic use. To counter this grievance, royal decrees recently regulated the use of charcoal and the establishment of charcoal kilns, glassworks, and metal smelters.

Dieudonné moves mainly in circles of the petty nobility and wealthy bourgeoisie and is clearly delighted with his stay in the *Marais*. Although the monetary compensation for his work is lower than in Flanders, mainly due to the low value of the French pound, he freely uses the facilities of his employers' household. This is much better than living independently in

student rooms. Moreover, he is well-liked in intellectual circles, where his erudition is highly valued. As a preceptor, Dieudonné develops various card games with which he organizes question-and-answer sessions with his disciples. He adopted the idea after a salon conversation he happened to attend. Madame Saffres-de-Montbard is a modest *salonnière* but still regularly organizes encounters in the *Hôtel* on the Place Royale. One day, one of the older people present spoke to him about the work of the Jesuit Claude Oronce Finé de Brianville. This educator had transformed an ordinary deck of cards into a question-and-answer series, with which young noblemen could learn the heraldry, geography, and history of the great European empires: the hearts represent the French empire; Italy and the papacy are represented by the clubs; the peaks represent the Northern Empires, the Holy Roman Empire, Hungary, Great Britain, Sweden, and Denmark. After other principalities, the Seventeen Provinces come under the three of peaks. The diamonds represent Spain, with Portugal included under the queen. Dieudonné learns that Brianville used this deck, among others, to educate the grandfather of the current Louis XV, Louis le Grand Dauphin.

Dieudonné updates the game and adds new ones to describe antiquity and incorporate scientific developments. He also draws inspiration from other card games such as *Illustrious Men & Women, Fables, Geography, Cosmography, Morality, Politics, Logic, Physics* for which publisher Desmaret holds the printing monopoly by royal decree.

Dieudonné quickly grasped the sharp distinctions between

classes in the France of Louis XV. The aristocracy is constantly seeking new entertainment and, in addition to art and theatre, is also interested in science. But scientists and philosophers who did not themselves come from noble families do not hold the same place in the salons as those who combined a noble title with research. One doesn't speak of craftsmen, servants, or plebs. One only expected them not to get in the way of the Lords and Ladies.

Dieudonné also finds that the university is not a place where one can discuss science and literature. Its governance is dogmatic, regardless of its underlying Catholic orientation. Paris has other, better spaces for exchanging ideas about knowledge. Research takes place in laboratories, museums, and even in some monasteries. Unlike its Germanic neighbours, where universities seem crucial for acquiring knowledge, in Paris, people visit laboratories, cafés, and salons for this purpose.

Coffeehouses are generally boisterous. All sorts of magazines are available, and anyone can discuss anything without inhibition. In some countries, these establishments welcome anyone with money and time. Paris currently has several hundred such cafés. Some of them are truly select. The aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie, in a sense, reserve places for themselves where they can indulge themselves without interruption from those outside their station. The *Café Procope* and the *Café de Régence* are lavishly furnished. The drinks you can buy there keep you awake and alert instead of making you foolish and drunk. Yet, discussions often escalate, and occasionally they lead to a challenge, resulting in violence. Montesquieu wrote not so long

ago: *'This drink gives you wit. If I were the sovereign, I would close the cafes because those who frequent them get their brains annoyingly hot..'*

Dieudonné occasionally accompanies *Sieur* Saffres-de-Montbard. His employer enjoys being seen in the company of his children's erudite preceptor. He himself prefers the tranquility of the Régence to the chaotic surroundings of the Procope near the Comédie Française theatre. It was there that he first encountered Voltaire in person, some time after hearing about his indignation regarding the church's attitude toward the actresses. He would love to discuss satire and comedy with Voltaire and his conversational friends. He is aware of the rivalry between French and Italian comedians. He also knows that the French sometimes criticise *Commedia dell'Arte* not always appreciated. He would like to let those arguing gentlemen have their say about Marivaux's social comedies, more specifically about the *Slave Island*, which reverses the roles of slave and master. There is no great connection between Marivaux and other philosophers. Yet, he would like to hear from these minds, who so busily debate the arrogant attitude of the old nobility and aristocracy towards the lower nobility and the bourgeoisie, how they think about the relationship with the rest of the people, both servants and slaves. When he later discusses his frustration with Mathilde, she teases him about his naiveté.

Mathilde. He first met her in the salon of a friend of Madame Saffres-de-Montbard. Dieudonné preferred such salon visits to the coffee house. The well-known and lesser-known *salonnières* successfully bring together science and knowledge, literature,

art, and entertainment, and foster conversation about them.
That day, at the invitation of the hostess herself, he will speak about life in Leiden. About *Belgium Fœderatum* little is known here. So, a story from a former Leiden student, who can also speak about Amsterdam, is a welcome bonus.
After his conversation, a young woman approaches him. She introduces herself as Mathilde Larouge-au-Château and immediately tells him to drop the castle. He tries to get her to pronounce his name, Lesmeister, but she can't. They both laugh. Mathilde then asks him about the Dutch East India Company and its disputes with a similar company in *Belgium Austriacum*. Dieudonné is surprised that Mathilde seems quite well-informed about the political background of the conflict underlying the machinations surrounding the Pragmatic Sanction. He tells her about his parents in Oostende and how his father often talks with captains of the Ostend Company. Both find their conversation very enjoyable, and he sees it as a good excuse to invite her for a walk in the gardens of Place Royal.

With Mathilde, Dieudonné gets to know the old Parisian island, the Île du Palais. *Sieur* Saffres-de-Montbard's carriage crosses the Pont Neuf to go from home to the *Comédie Française* when he uses to drive to Procope, but during those trips he saw little of the island. Now that he had better mastered his fear of walking into the city, he walks with Mathilde via Rue Saint Paul and Rue des Ormes to the Quai de Bourbon and then over the wooden bridge towards *le Terrein*. As they walk down Rue de l'Abreuvoir, Mathilde speaks of Boileau, who spent the last years of his life there. She tells him about the conflict between classics

and moderns at the Académie Française. Boileau championed the classics, relying on Racine and De La Fontaine, among others. Charles Perrault leads the moderns, defending Quinault, Chapelain, Scudéry, and Saint-Sorlin, among others, who, in his view, are far more valuable than Homer, Virgil, Molière, or Racine. Dieudonné says he himself is not convinced of this recurring view that *earlier* was primitive and uncouth and that *now* is evolved and refined. If he understands it correctly, the dispute transcends purely literary aspects. Wasn't one of Perrault's arguments that the Catholic world as a whole is much more refined than the ancient world of the Greeks and Romans? He wonders where the refinement lies when one shifts from keeping slaves from conquered territories to keeping captured and sold slaves from territories occupied or invaded by Catholic Europeans. He also wonders how one can consider battles under Christian rulers, seeking to increase their possessions, more refined than battles under the ancient leaders, seeking loot and possessions. How does invoking gods and demigods differ from beholding relics to which miraculous value is attributed?

Mathilde laughs when Dieudonné draws these kinds of parallels. Put that way, she says, one could even argue that Antiquity was far better off than today in terms of bathing and hygiene. Not to mention the refinement of the Turkish and Moorish world, when you read the descriptions of the use of water, fragrant essences, and ritual washings. And that is the world whose inhabitants are labeled infidel, apostate, and barbarian by Europeans. But she still wants to return to Boileau's literary oeuvre. Some see him as a mild-mannered figure. Others portray him as a hothead, a

figurehead of the wealthy bourgeoisie. He defended the classics and fiercely refuted the arguments of superiority of the Catholic world and the court of Louis XIV at the time. Yet he was a welcome guest at court. He entered the Académie Française at the express wish of the king, for whom he was historiographer along with Racine. Yet he remained loyal to his Jansenist background. Satire and caricature, of course, sharply portray the less attractive aspects of people and groups. It is therefore not surprising that Boileau's twelve satires caused considerable outrage. Incidentally, the publication permission for the twelfth satire, in which he takes aim at the Jesuits, was revoked at the insistence of the French Provincial Le Tellier. Abbot Boileau intervened and ensured the distribution of a clandestine edition of the satire. It was a personal act of revenge against the Jesuits. Dieudonné is astonished that only twenty years ago an abbot and doctoral candidate in theology at the Sorbonne took such initiatives. Mathilde recounts that Abbot Boileau was indeed a theologian, but also shared many traits with his brother Nicolas. It is said of him that he preferred to write in Latin for fear that the bishops might otherwise misread and persecute him. Dieudonné laughs heartily. Mathilde then adds that Voltaire, whom Dieudonné apparently admires, had repeatedly expressed his admiration for this man, about whom Nicolas had said that if his brother had not become a theologian he would certainly have become a doctor in *Comedia dell'arte*. Voltaire claims that Abbot Boileau was a strange mind, who wrote strange books in strange Latin.

While Nicolas Boileau was once the figurehead of the well-to-

do bourgeoisie, tolerated by the aristocracy at the highest levels, Mathilde was no less worthy. Dieudonné quickly learns this. She is a welcome guest at both the most modest and the most fashionable *salonnières*. Whenever his work permits, he accompany her to salon gatherings.

Madame de Tencin holds her *salon* on Rue Saint-Honoré, not far from Place de Louis le Grand. It is rumoured that she is the mother of the gifted young Jean Le Rond Daremberg, whose father may have been his benefactor, Duke Arenberg. Daremberg would soon gain fame as a mathematician under the name D'Alembert. Mathilde tells Dieudonné that even if art and science are topics of conversation in the salons, this kind of news has an eager audience. Neither pays any attention to it. They do not yet know that their aloof attitude toward gossip and intrigue, and their criticism of certain aspects of the circles in which they move, will be one of the reasons that will soon almost force them to leave Paris. Nor can they yet imagine that they would later come into contact with D'Alembert, when he, along with Diderot, takes charge of compiling the first French Encyclopaedia.
At Madame de Tencin's house, Dieudonné meets Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, later known as Madame Geoffrin, in whose salon D'Alembert became a regular visitor.

Shortly before Madame la Marquise de Lambert's death, Dieudonné encounters Montesquieu in her salon at the Hôtel de Nevers. The philosopher speaks about the necessity of the separation of powers. Dieudonné recognised this as a critique of absolutist rule. He later speaks to Montesquieu and tells him

that he had spent several years in Leiden, where he had *Persian Letters* read, published by Pierre Marteau. *Sieur* Charles de Montesquieu smiles subtly at him. “The 1721 Cologne edition?” he asks. When Dieudonné confirms this, surprised that his interlocutor knows such a detail, he says, “You may not have heard of it yet, but I selected and arranged the letters and proposed the final composition of the book.” Dieudonné is enthusiastic: “Did you meet the authors of the letters personally?” “That, I can’t say,” Montesquieu replies with a peculiar smile.

When he inquires about Madame Lambert who is next door Anne-Louise-Benedicte de Bourbon, the most famous *salonnière* of the moment, he learns that she recently published *‘Letters on True Education’* with J.F. Bernard in Amsterdam. In it, she writes that delighting others is the most delicate pleasure. But for this, she continues, ‘*goods and fortune are not so much needed. Wealth has never led to virtue; but virtue has often brought wealth*.’ Dieudonné wonders whether she wants to express what is sometimes said in sourdine: between the debauchery that reigned at the court of the late Duke of Orleans and the frivolity in the Chateau de Sceaux, the salon of the Marquise de Lambert is a literary haven.

In this *Letters* Madame de Lambert addresses her son about the real glory and her daughter about the need for education for women.

She reminds her son that glory and honor rest on honesty, friendship, and appreciation, and rarely on idolatry or flattery. She warns how dangerous it is to stir up hatred. It can be useful

to be feared by others, if done on a just basis, but it is almost always dangerous to take revenge. She writes: '*For honest men, it is glorious to counteract patience with passion, moderation with injustice. Indignant hatred places you lower than those who hate you. Do not judge your enemies; do nothing to absolve them; they harm us less than our mistakes. Small souls are cruel, great men show mercy. Having said this, know that the sweetest of victories is to give life to those who would attack ours. Nothing is more glorious and delicate than this kind of revenge: it's the only kind that honest people allow themselves. As soon as your enemy repents and submits, you lose the right to revenge..*'

In over eighty pages, Madame de Lambert explains to her son how a truly well-behaved man behaves towards others. She discusses the education of girls and women in even more detail in a letter to her daughter. She says: '*Throughout history, the education of girls has been neglected; we pay attention only to men. Women are left to themselves, as if they were a separate species, without considering that they constitute half of the world necessarily connected to them, that they are the joys and sorrows of men who want to see and feel them reasonably every day; that houses are built or destroyed by them; that the education of children is entrusted to them in their early youth, precisely at those moments when impressions are most vivid and profound.. How can one expect inspired children when, from their earliest youth, they are left to governesses, who usually come from the people and thus arouse base feelings, awaken timid passions, and exchange faith for superstition? One should think much more about inheriting certain virtues by passing them on from mother to child,*

rather than replacing the natural mother with a false one. Therefore, nothing is more misunderstood than the education one gives young women. Their destiny is to please. They are given lessons only to learn to consent; they are reinforced for self-love; they are delivered to the world and false opinions, to weakness of thought. They are never taught virtue and willpower. It is unjust, even madness, not to think that such an education will ultimately backfire on them.'

Dieudonné has read Madame Lambert's work with great interest. He appreciates her call for mothers to be responsible for raising their own children. He notes that, like Comenius a hundred years ago, the Marquise also advocates for a more nurturing education for girls and women. He does, however, discuss with Mathilde the aristocracy's indifference to what is condescendingly called the common people.

Mathilde laughs: "The aristocracy and the bourgeoisie too, my dear," she replies. She tells him she was a bit surprised when Dieudonné told him about his father's visits to the inn. Although Mathilde's father sees Dieudonné more as a paid artisan than from a wealthy bourgeoisie, Mathilde clearly sees him as an equal. An equal whose father asks the same questions about religion, government positions, displays of power, and property that they both ask. She points out to him that the way the bourgeoisie expresses itself about "the people" is no different from how the aristocracy does. She believes that, because of his background and education, he perhaps lost sight of the fact that their own class is generally just as condescending as the nobility is to servants and the common people.

Dieudonné can now also speak about the frivolous parties of Duchess Anne-Louise-Bénédicte de Bourbon of Maine. At the invitation of a high-ranking friend of Mathilde's, they attend a theatrical performance at the Pavillon de l'Aurore in the Parque de Sceaux, followed by fireworks, music, and entertainment. This is how they become acquainted with the libertine world of the Chateau des Sceaux-

There they meet the 34-year-old Marie de Vichy-Chamrond, who has borne the title of Marquise du Duffand since her marriage 12 years ago.

That same evening, Dieudonné once again encounters Voltaire, for whom he has mixed feelings today. The poet and writer is in his late thirties. He looks lively and vibrant and has piercing, brilliant eyes. Dieudonné quickly understands why *Sieur* Voltaire so often angers people. For the man himself, the world doesn't revolve around the sun, but around Voltaire. He accepts all the admiration he receives for granted and is very sharp in taking a stand and condemning opponents. The theistic Voltaire, for example, sharply criticises all Abrahamic religions. In doing so, he aggressively ignores the idea that all people share the same origin, as this would imply the original couple, Adam and Eve. In his virulent style, Voltaire argues that someone is blind if they cannot see and understand that the vast differences between white, brown, and black people, with completely different noses and eyes, are proof that there are different kinds of people. In a rather crude tone he then clearly states that blacks taken as slaves to another place in the world also give birth to black children, which immediately refutes any geophysical argument.

Dieudonné has his own ideas about the playful yet malicious nature of the aristocracy. He is surprised that even the philosopher Montesquieu or the mathematician Malézieu accept to be a 'knight' of the *Order of the Honey Fly*. This 'order' had been founded a quarter-century earlier by the *salonnière* Louise-Bénédicte de Bourbon, Duchesse de Maine, who intrigued against the Regent and Dauphin. The Duchess placed herself for life at the head of this provocative order and chose her officers from among the lower nobility. Nicolas de Malézieu is a prime example. But even individuals without noble backgrounds, such as Abbot Charles-Claude Genest or Abbot Guillaume Amfrye de Chaulieu, were her officers until their deaths.

Mathilde laughs again at Dieudonné's naivety. "Don't forget," she says, "that Louise-Bénédicte is the wife of Louis Auguste de Bourbon. He is the son of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan. Shortly before his death, the king legally recognised him, so he is a *Prince of Blood*. Can you imagine how irresistible the brilliance of the *Small Courtyard* at the Château de Sceaux is for the minor nobility and for those who rose through the ranks of the petty or upper bourgeoisie? Belonging to a court is vital for anyone who wants to be seen in fashionable circles and isn't of the highest birth. Therefore, it shouldn't be surprising to find both Voltaire and Jean-Baptiste Rousseau among the knights of this 'counter-order'. I think you'll see other thinkers joining in the coming years.

Of course, Dieudonné would later agree with Mathilde. When the Duchess of Maine died in 1753, the order included d'Alembert, Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, Émilie du Chatelet, and

Madame du Deffand. Without Dieudonné ever knowing, Frederick the Great of Prussia later expressed his doubts in a letter to d'Alembert when he compared the academic world of Berlin with that of Paris: "*How much time is left for a 'man of the great world' in Paris to study, let alone to think? The matinee, the visits, a midday meal, then a performance followed by a play until supper until two in the morning, then 'good adventures' and sleep, and then you get up around 11 a.m. Every moment of the day is so busy, and you're busy doing nothing.*"

The birth of ignarometry

While Dieudonné divides his time between raising and teaching the Saffres-de-Montbard children, spending afternoons with Mathilde in salons, and attending theatre and opera events, John, in Oostende, closely follows the developments of the now-banned Ostend Company. His first observation is that little has changed financially. Although the company has been officially suspended to please England and the United Provinces, shipowners continue to rig ships for the China voyages by mutual agreement.

In a long letter to his son, John writes, among other things:

'Regarding the Ostend Company, I can tell you that directors and auditors are still selected from experienced trading firms, both in Ghent and Antwerp. A positive consequence of this is that bribes and shady payments are unlikely. The conduct of Thomas Ray and Paul de Kimpe is currently being investigated, and it is already clear that if they chose self-interest over the interests of the Company itself, it will cost them dearly.

Everyone knows they have to avoid mistakes, that the voyages must be completed successfully, and that they must be faster than those of the competition. The international political turmoil is bad enough. Our captains are experienced men who dare to depart later in the year with ships with copper-plated bows and make intensive use of the wind currents below the cape of storms. How exactly they manage it, I don't know, but all in all, the Oostende China ships travel almost three months faster than the ships of the Dutch East India Company of the Seven Provinces. Imagine the difference that makes, not only for health and human lives, but also for net profit. As you can see, tea has now become so common that prices have risen sharply again. The British dumping just a few years ago has had a somewhat opposite effect. One of the Oostende directors recently stated: 'on verra avec le tems que le commerce des Indes ne sera a considerer que comme un commerce ordinaire, car tout le monde le voudra entreprendre. C'est l'effet de tous ces mouvemens des anglais et hollandais qui voullant nous ruiner se sont encore ruinés eux-mêmes..' I am a moderate optimist.

The same letter also discusses John and Marianne's research work.

Son, your mother and I have our own Opus Omnia. *We finished or work. We argue that ideas about education and the generalisation of access to knowledge are often contradictory. Moreover, access to knowledge is defined very differently depending on the social class to which children and young people belong. We propose three social classes, which we somewhat unorthodoxly call the poor class, the emerging wealth class, and the upper aristocracy class. A consistent phenomenon in each class occurs with regard to women: they are always relegated to a secondary position.*

Our reading and observation clearly teach us that religious power

is a patronising and oppressive force. Within the Catholic religious establishment, we observe that the Jesuits, undeniably present in all schools from elementary school to university, play an ambiguous role. Those in power create a form of education for the poor that differs from that for the wealthy. The formation of an elite that distances itself from and loves the rest of humanity is a very deliberate choice. The outline of our work is as follows:

Education and schools for children of the		
Arms Stand	Emerging Wellness	High aristocratic class
Ideas from:		
	Ratke	
Claudius Cardinalis		
	Manoel Andrade Figueiredo	
	Locke	
La Salle : instruction	La Flèche etc.	Jesuits
	Port Royal	
Démia: poor's school		Ancient philosophers
De Trap der Jeugd by Carl de Gelliers		
Ian Amos Comenius		
Yacob		

Locke relies on other authors to argue that children may be thinking beings, yet they are treated very differently. One could argue that those who establish the separation between schools for the upper class and those for the poor harbour doubts about the intellectual capacity of children of the lower class. Those from that class who grow up to become notable philosophers or scientists, or who achieve success in the religious world, would therefore be exceptions, ordained by God.

We also address lesson plans. These aren't necessarily class-specific.

Different thinkers and teachers have different approaches. To be clear: both Comenius and La Salle discuss lesson plans for teaching the poor, but with quite different approaches. It's somewhat sobering to see, when reviewing the texts of the ancient philosophers, to the extent we have them, that dialogue was perhaps less directional and more used to develop dogmatic thinking in students.
But we also demonstrate contradictions in the approach to reading instruction. In schooling, the curriculum focuses more on deciphering than on capturing a thought. In other words, only with the advent of the written word did education seem to clearly serve to capture one's own thoughts or the thoughts of others and then verbalize them. But throughout the history of childhood education, especially if one is convinced that children are not thinking beings, the main goal is deciphering. And this happens in a very systematic and slow way. Look at what Carl de Gelliers writes in 'Trap der jeugd ofte Perfecte maniere om de jonge kinderen ende oude perzoonen met fondament te leeren lezen ende schryven [Stairway of youth or Perfect way to teach young children and old persons to read and write with foundation]'. In the latest edition he explains again that children first learn the self-speakers*, by some receiving the name of* vowels*, then the* co-sounders*, and finally the* half-sounders (today consonants, translation note). *Only when the student can recognise and name all these letters and combinations of letters does he or she move on to the second level. In this level, the student is presented with syllables that consist of the combination of* self-sounders *and* co-sounders *or* half-sounders. *The in syllables divided* Our Father *is often the example text. It can no longer be recited from memory. First, the young reader must spell to name the constituent letters of each syllable and then combine them to form the corresponding syllable. Then*

follow endless lists of words broken down into syllables to spell and recite. I don't know if you can imagine this, Dieudonné. You and I developed our reading skills by recognising words using the illustrated pictures of Orbis Sensualium Pictus *and both you and I learned to write and read simultaneously. This was largely thanks to our preceptors and parents, who continued to view writing and reading as a dual entity and didn't emphasise strictly separate and gradual learning content. Of course, Jean Baptiste La Salle's prescriptions are an extreme form of this. It's more about disciplining children for repetitive and monotonous work than teaching them to read and write.*

You may have seen the name Manoel de Andrade Figueiredo on our chart above. Perhaps that name doesn't ring a bell. We recently read his book Nova Escola para Aprender a ler, escrever e contar, offerecida A' Augusta Magestade do Senhor Dom João V, Rey from Portugal *in 1722. My good friend Lejeune, who was staying in Lisbon on behalf of the Bishop of Bruges to secure the release of several Flemish crew members from a ship impounded there, was kind enough to bring a copy of the book and give it to us. We were particularly touched by the following passage, which I am translating for you here because you don't speak Portuguese: "The usual exordium of the Masters to teach reading begins by introducing the boys to the twenty-one letters of the abécé with which the syllables are composed, not only those of our language, but of the languages of many other nations of the world that use the abécé of the Latin language. They then move on to the letter cards with Ba and Bam and Be and Bem, and from there to names, prayers, and various writings, such as complete sentences and reports. Experience is the best teacher in all speculative sciences, and that experience shows us that after all this work, the boys are left in almost the same ignorance in which they began; for*

the greatest fruit they will derive from this teaching will be the knowledge of letters and the spelling of names without pronouncing them fully; and so those who in this way attain the aim of being able to read, owe it more to their own ability than to the zeal of the masters who teach them in this long-winded, and to the beginners who endure it painful, way, ignoring every other method because it was never shown to them."

What Master Manoel proposes is to name the letters after syllables are taught to be recognised. This is to prevent children from developing the false impression that each letter has only one sound and that the co-sounds are pronounced in a single, unmistakable way. In Portuguese, many co-sounds are barely pronounced, if at all, but they emphasise subtleties of self-sounds, which, for example, may or may not be pronounced nasally. He limits the initial reading instruction to five cards with a richer selection of syllables and recommends letting children learn at their own pace. Your mother and I think that Master Manoel's syllable cards could be adapted to cards with existing words and pictures. A kind of simplified version of Orbis Sensualium Pictus, then.

Of course, learning to read and write is only one aspect of the little school, and for the poor, reading is often the only aspect. We propose that we reconsider the entire purpose of school and education. As I mentioned, we see that lesson plans from little school onwards can have a more dialogic or instructional character. In our opinion, the choice has to do with how people think about children. It's only recently that it's increasingly been assumed that children might be thinking beings. Has anyone really considered how children learn to speak? They hear others around them speaking and imitate what they hear. They gradually learn when their words make sense and when they don't, because they observe how their elders react to what they say. Isn't that the

essence of dialogic learning? Can't we use it in learning to read, write, and study the natural sciences? And can someone who wants to instruct a dogma ever work in a dialogic way? Won't such a person always engage in false dialogue? Won't the master always want to undermine the disciple when what the disciple says doesn't align with what the master is obligated to accept as absolute truth?

Did the ancient philosophers, Zera Yacob and our dear friend Claudius Cardinalis, intuitively understand that dialogue is the foundation of a learning process and that instruction is indeed the foundation of craftsmanship, but also of any form of enslavement? Does the following sketch clarify our thinking?

Sketch of forms of learning		
Tendentially dialogic	Mixed	Tendentially instructive
Way of thinking that we find in		
Some older philosophers	Comenius	Ratke
Cardinal Claudius	Manoel A. Figueredo	Gelliers
Yacob	Locke	La Salle
		Démia
In acquiring reading, writing and craft skills		
Decode AFTER encoding		Decoding BEFORE encoding

We are currently awaiting permission to print our work. Our cousins in Frankfurt will handle the printing. Your grandfather is certainly enthusiastic about what he read. We don't yet know whether we will print under a pseudonym or not. We can imagine that questions may arise from church circles.

I also want to tell you that your mother and I are working on another plan. We're getting help from your sister Maria and Begga de Bruges.

We've long understood that the interaction between the degree of arrogance and the degree of ignorance determines relationships

between people. It's even possible to create a kind of image of different human characters based on their personal arrogance and ignorance, and to plot it on a kind of scale.
We will publish this anonymously in Amsterdam. The sketch we present below may be quite harmless in itself, but the accompanying texts could offend both secular and church leaders. And if that happens, we already know how the arrogance will work. By maintaining anonymity, we especially want to protect Maria and Begga.
The sketch looks something like this:

Different people										
Arrogance: From Little to Much (Ignorance Irrelevant)										
Slavishly						Compul-sory despot				Slave driver
Ignorance: From Little to Much (Arrogance Irrelevant)										
Diplomatic										Knecht
Ignorance from little to much and arrogance from much to little										
Arrogant leader					Tolerant unfortuna-tely					Tamed fool
Warlord										Cannon fodder
Ignorance and arrogance both from little to much										
Universal humanist	Convinced humanist	Humanist paternalist		Tolerate the huma-nists	Mussel	Tolerant Europeïst	Europeïst paternalist	Intolerant Europeist		Destroyer

You can feel free to talk about it with others.

The letter ends with a "*perfumed by the North Sea wind*" hug. Dieudonné enthusiastically presents his parents' ideas for education and training to several fellow preceptors and also to college instructors. The heated debates are not long in coming. That is perhaps what Marianne and John intend. Many of those addressed find the attention given to the plebs and even the slaves suspicious. It is as if the authors are treating that class the same way as the aristocracy and the upper middle class. That

would be a dangerous denial of the evidence. *God has willed the classes* is the most frequently heard argument. When Dieudonné says that this kind of argument is a clear example of how preceptors themselves defend the instructional servitude, the discussions become even more heated. He speaks with Mathilde again about the *Letters* by Madame de Lambert. He would like to write her to point out that when it comes to raising children, both boys and girls, not only governesses from the lower classes are a danger, but also tutors from the lower middle classes. Mathilde suggests keeping the conversation going during the salon gatherings they attend, rather than writing to Madame de Lambert. Dieudonné always does this, cleverly assisted by Mathilde, something her high-ranking family doesn't appreciate very much. Her father hopes to be ennobled for services rendered, and the relationship between his daughter and that Flemish troublemaker she seems to be increasingly associated with is clearly putting things in the wrong direction.

During a conversation about how arrogant people can exploit the ignorance of others, Dieudonné hears the full story of Abraham Peyrenc de Moras…

Dear parents,

I congratulate you very much on the publication of your Opus Omnia. Our discussions about education and training, both in academic circles and among home teachers, show that you very accurately point out several sore spots. What strikes me most is how rarely, in all the circles I move in, a sensible word is heard about the children of the people. Generally, the little schools of the Christian Brothers are considered a blessing for the people here, and they don't like to hear that they are actually about

enslavement. Charles Démia at least spoke clearly when he said that the task of the little school is to get young vagabonds off the streets and turn them into useful servants. Lasalle is more ambiguous, and everyone hears what they want to hear.

But today I want to entertain you with a different story. If my memory serves me correctly, I mentioned the name Peyrenc in my first letter from Paris. He enriched himself with Law's scheme. Abraham Peyrenc left the Cévennes at a young age to become a valet-barber to reserve soldier François-Marie Fargès. Fargès had already enriched himself as an ammunition supplier. From soldier, he rose to become a wealthy rentier. Peyrenc was dazzled by example. As I wrote at the time, he married Fargès' daughter. Thus, he became part of Fargès' deliveries to the king's armies. Father-in-law and son-in-law enriched themselves even more by speculating on the associated letters of credit. After the death of Louis XIV, Abraham decided to take the easy way out and settled in England for a few months. But he soon returned and, together with his father-in-law, subscribed to the government bonds of the institution managed by Law, which had since acquired the status of a state bank. When the debacle ensued, both quickly had their government bonds visaed. By 1719, Peyrenc was already so wealthy that he left banking. He chose uncertain speculative activities in exchange for more substantial assets. He bought himself a position as secretary to the king and was given a title of nobility. In the following decade, he acquired houses and lands worth a total of around three million pounds. But already in 1719, he paid around 120,000 pounds for the Lordship of Moras to the Duchesse de Brancas. With this marquisate in his pocket, he could henceforth call himself Peyrenc de Moras. He continued to buy lordships from impoverished landed gentry and accumulated marquisates. By 1727, he owned several châteaux. The family lived

in a hôtel that Peyrenc de Moras had built on Place Louis le Grand. Not satisfied with this, he wanted to further display his wealth. He purchases a vast building plot of nearly half a square mile on Rue de Varenne, next to the Invalides. He entrusts the construction of his Hôtel de Moras to architect Jean Aubert. The family lives there now, although the château-like building is not yet fully finished.
Peyrenc de Moras' fortune is entirely based on letters of credit for payment to the major war contractors. In this, Peyrenc and his father-in-law, Fargès, always arrogantly used their own knowledge to defraud unsuspecting small and medium-sized owners. Just before the speculative scheme collapsed, Peyrenc had already converted his fictitious wealth into physical land, primarily by paying off debts. I've heard it said that the originally rigid Huguenot, upon first encountering wealth, immediately surrendered to it. His fellow thinkers claim that he succumbed to that toxic environment of profit and wealth accumulation and thus quickly succumbed to the golden calf. An arrogant servant of an arrogant warlord enslaves the ignorant landed gentry and buys them out. Isn't that a beautiful illustration of your arrogance-ignorance scheme?
I promise to tell you more about my discussions regarding school and education in a future letter.
Your loving son Dieudonné.

Paris, folie-misère…

Since arriving in Paris, Dieudonné has found himself involved in an ongoing discussion about cosmopolitanism, tolerance, empathy and… *emergency lie*. It seems unlikely: in the *Regency* as well as the *Procope* there has long been a lively debate about whether faith poses a threat to humanity. Skeptics and those

who see religion as an obstacle to far-reaching humanism, in particular, fuel this topic. Less radical figures argue that more well-known humanists in Europe come from Christian backgrounds, even though Christianity also contains questionable movements. But why does this debate escalate so much? The irony is that it has a literary rather than a religious or political connotation-

In both Leiden and Leuven, Dieudonné never had much attention was paid to what he labeled as the rivalry between theologians and preachers. His parents often showed him how easily envy and jealousy can lead to the vilification of opponents and even supporters. The current discussion in which he is being drawn concerns Jacques Saurin. He died in The Hague the same year Dieudonné arrived in Paris. Dieudonné knows something about the background. Jacques Saurin had been a highly sought-after preacher for quite some time. Both the court and the plebs adored him. In the last fifteen years of his life, his enormous popularity aroused envy among fellow preachers. His most famous opponents were undoubtedly Armand de la Chapelle, a preacher in London and The Hague, and Theodoor Huet, a preacher in Amsterdam. Armand de la Chapelle was not only a preacher but also a chronicler and editor of the *Bibliothèque Angloise* and collaborating with the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée des Ouvrages des Savans de l'Europe.*

The controversy erupted over a sensitive issue. Theologians and preachers usually interpret the commandment '*Do not bear false witness against your neighbour'* as '*you shall not lie*'. There has always been doubt about the concept of lying. This is not found

as such in the instructions given directly by God to Moses. It does appear in the various versions of the Holy Scriptures of the Abrahamic religions. Even more difficult is dealing with the *emergency lie*. Is such a lie permissible? The subtlety opens up a wealth of possibilities, including in case studies, to determine whether a sin is being concealed. And that's linked to another question. Is a lie, or an emergency lie, permissible in the secular world — to cover up a painful truth, for example — but not from an ethical perspective? Catholic and Lutheran theologians argue about it. Calvinists seem to assume that any lie, even an emergency lie, is always sinful. The story goes that when Saurin speaks of David's anointing by Samuel, he asks how the Lord handles the concealment of the truth when He commands His servant to conceal the real reason for his coming and only announce his appearance to offer sacrifice. Saurin claims to have examined this difficulty himself. He then supposedly stated that the emergency lie cannot be unconditionally condemned. He is said to have deliberately shown that the Most High, without in any way diminishing His adorable perfection, had in this case concealed the truth.

Although some doubt the veracity of the entire story, this was just what Saurin's opponents needed. Theodor Huet, but especially Armand de la Chapelle, pulled out all the stops to vilify him and make it clear that Saurin was a blasphemer by treating the phenomenon of emergency lying so lightly.

Among his Calvinist friends and admirers, there were also those who felt that Saurin had perhaps not expressed himself clearly enough regarding the emergency lie. He was, it was said, better

at understanding God than his fellow human beings. He didn't necessarily misjudge people, but he maintained such a respect for each person that he didn't want to offend anyone. He was a quiet figure. You could even say that he had little knowledge of the world and therefore preferred to keep aloof. But that was grist to the mill of those who wanted to vilify him and found in that aloofness an excuse to portray him as proud and unapproachable.
In his sermons, Saurin himself took a resolute stand against superstition and unbelieving philosophy. That said, he attempted to demonstrate that he only wanted to place the lie of necessity within a broader context for the sake of tolerance and human empathy. He never questioned predestination, but he did argue that predestination doesn't mean that one will be preserved and saved without working towards it. Therefore, he believed that difficult ethical questions like the emergency lie should be examined from different perspectives.
The attacks directed at Saurin continued to escalate, further fuelling the controversy. Successive church councils remained inconclusive. Ultimately, the authorities of the Republic of the Seven Provinces intervened. The Synod quickly declared the matter resolved and filed after investigation. In a sense, the slandered Jacques Saurin was rehabilitated. But the entire incident cast a shadow over the final years of his life.

But that is not what is being discussed today in the boisterous debates in the Parisian cafés. The discussion is about the fate of François Bruys, who, in his own periodical, according to The Hague prohibited *Critique Désintéressée des Journaux Littéraires*

et des Ouvrages des Savans took up Saurin's defense. And he was indeed convicted for his writings. The conversation among writers, artists, and philosophers in the cafes doesn't so much consider the emergency lie, but rather the right of the *columnist* on opinion and on freedom of expression.

It is said that all François Bruys did was take a stand against Armand de La Chapelle by defending Saurin's explanation of the emergency lie. In doing so, Bruys denounced the scheming practices of four ministers from The Hague and the Synods of Kampen and The Hague. The Walloon and Flemish consistories immediately filed a lawsuit against him. Bruys then asked for forgiveness from the four targeted ministers, which was granted. Bruys then requested a pardon from the lawsuit. But then, a few months before his death, Saurin denied having anything to do with the articles in *Critique Désintéressée.*The trial took place and Bruys' co-publishers were sentenced to pay fines while Bruys had to renounce what he had written and go into exile.

Two years later, François Bruys is still a hero of the cafés and bookstores. He's a topic of conversation in the churches of The Hague and elsewhere. He wrote about how clergy pose a danger to anyone who wants to express their own opinion. They represent the violence of faith. Who will keep them in check in the Republic and elsewhere? Ultimately, according to Bruys, La Chapelle is the dangerous person. He wants to allow tolerance only within the boundaries of the fundamental articles of faith. And that, Bruys claims, is precisely the beginning of all religious persecution. More, say Dieudonné's interlocutors, that is the persecution of free speech in general. Many agree that Bruys is

right when he says that freedom of speech is ultimately greater in the Ottoman Empire than in the Republic. The rumour spread by dogmatists that where the Turks rule, all heretical ideas flourish only reinforces that idea.
There's debate about the separation between ecclesiastical and secular power. Could François Bruys have misunderstood Armand de La Chapelle? Could La Chapelle have advocated secular tolerance but not religious tolerance? And can you really separate the two? Isn't ethics also about empathy and therefore tolerance? Thanks to the correspondence Dieudonné, Mathilde, and their friends maintain with others, they know that in Leiden and Amsterdam, Berlin and Leuven, Bologna and Geneva — in short, in many places — discussions are taking place about the dividing line between ecclesiastical and secular power, between religious practice and freedom of expression. Of course, all the discussions also have a local flavour. It's not easy to separate the local from the general.

Meanwhile, Mathilde and Dieudonné dream of a kind of cosmopolitan humanism that transcends the boundaries of states and religion. And not only among informed citizens and aristocrats, but also in the general education of ignorant servants and slaves. A cosmopolitan vision that extends beyond the vision of the nearly two-hundred-year-old *Res publica litteraria*. They bring up these ideas in salon conversations whenever they get the chance, using the outlines John sent to Dieudonné. They often encounter uncomprehending looks, especially when they discuss the ideals of a general education for the transmission of knowledge. These enlightened friends of

theirs, who like to harp on about the absolutist features of royalty and the privileges of the old nobility, apparently don't want their own small privileges to be eroded. The fact that writers, philosophers, and scientists, taken together, constitute a relatively small group makes it relatively easy for them to receive allowances from the wealthy nobility and bourgeoisie. Generalising privileges, yes, '*ma non troppo*' the Italians would say…

Dear father and mother,

How sad for you that Grandfather Pieter died without being able to see him again. Our family isn't exactly a family of homebodies. We apparently have a habit of living far apart. I only knew Grandfather and Grandmother from letters and stories. I'm glad you received his valuable comments before you published your Opus Omnia.

After reviewing your work, I browsed through some private libraries I have access to. Naturally, I was particularly interested in the work of the humanists that Grandfather Pieter and Grandmother Henriette and their friend Claudius often discussed. I looked up information about the Jansenist movement and Port-Royal, among other things. I often encounter looks of ignorance when I bring up these topics. Sometimes I encounter a worried look and am advised not to delve into such subjects.

I confess honestly that for the past few months, I've been spending more and more of my free and study time with Mathilde Larouge-au-Château, whom I think I've told you about before. She has a very free spirit. We attend literary salons together whenever we have the opportunity. Although she herself says she'd rather be Mathilde Larouge-sans-Château, her family name is a key that opens doors to the most remarkable salons held by ladies of the high aristocracy. Whenever we can, we try to gather knowledge and information

there. We also bring up other names ourselves. We're struck by how much the musical and literary knowledge of many of our occasional conversation partners extends far beyond our borders. At the same time, many know very little about daily life within the borders of another State, and perhaps even of their own. Among military personnel, the name of Oostende is known for its feats of arms. Some secretaries have heard of the Ostend Company but believe it no longer exists. Education and upbringing are rarely discussed except at Madame de Lambert's salon. It's not a popular topic. The practice is purely a craft. Philosophers or scientists find its practice uninteresting, and guests of the highest rank only know about it because they associate with preceptors and perhaps have some familiarity with university life. Even today, they generally view children as uninteresting creatures in the making, the concern of only less gifted masters or failed philosophers. When it comes to child rearing, Paris can sometimes be compared to classical Rome.

It strikes us, in the environment we usually find ourselves in, that only a small group of clergymen who have contact with missionaries and abbey life can say anything meaningful about the conditions in the new lands, the Indian Empire, and China. Nobody knows much about Barbary or Berberia, Nigritia, Nubia, Absinia, Mutapa — in short, about the African continent. I think the information you receive from ship captains and crews is more interesting and accurate than what we usually hear here. You could easily call Paris a place of European, if not French, arrogance. And on your terms, I would classify many of our conversation partners as ignorant, arrogant individuals. A kind of small, self-satisfied, intolerant, or paternalistic European despots. True despots, of course, are found among the less ignorant, arrogant figures, not just among the old nobility. Just look at that figure of Peyrenc de Moras, whom I mentioned in one of my previous letters.

Yours affectionately Dieudonné.

At Mathilde's urging, Dieudonné Lesmeester decides to change his name to Dieudonné Lemaître. Many people eventually call him that, as they can't pronounce his Flemish name. There are also those who recognise his mastery as a preceptor and think they've come up with an original pun.

Today, Dieudonné and Mathilde are renting a carriage to drive to Rue de Varenne. They want to see the Hôtel-Palace of Peyrenc de Moras, who died in November. On the way back to Place Royal, they'll visit Edmond Jean François Barbier, who invited them to his home for an early dinner. As they drive through the university district to Place Maubert, Dieudonné says he has a different impression of the city today than when he first arrived. He's increasingly seeing the flaws of this city of half a million inhabitants, where a handful of aristocrats display their palaces and a slightly larger number of wealthy nobles and burghers maintain theirs *Hôtels*. But the vast majority of Paris remains filthy, dirty, and unhealthy. Dieudonné would later fully agree with that other preceptor, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who wrote about his arrival in Paris: "*I expected a city as beautiful as it was grand, imposing in appearance, where you only see glittering streets and palaces of marble and gold. Instead, when I entered through the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, I saw only narrow, dirty, and stinking streets, dingy black houses, and an atmosphere of insalubrity; I saw beggars and poverty; I saw menders of old clothes, wagon drivers, and sellers of tea and old hats*." But that will be later. Jean-Jacques is only 19 today. After leaving Geneva and a stay in Turin, he lives with his patroness and mistress the

33-year-old Madame de Warens taking care of his education.

Mathilde and Dieudonné met Edmond Barbier by chance during a tea and coffee afternoon in one of the salons they regularly frequented, where lawyers often gathered. They were immediately intrigued when they learned that he kept a kind of chronicle of events in Paris in his diary. Because he sympathised with them, he recounted some of the facts he had recorded. When discussing morals and ethics, Barbier briefly touched on the unscrupulous Law and casually confirmed that several well-known figures today owe a large part of their fortune to him. Dieudonné told him that Mathilde and he sometimes questioned ethics, not only in the circles in which they moved, but also when the power of the king and the official church asserted itself. They agreed that freedom of speech exists in France. They argued that this was more because the high nobility readily dismisses criticism from other classes as amusing, rather than out of true tolerance. They then discuss the criticism inherent in comedy. It's useless when, through subtle censorship or financial and cultural barriers, it only reaches high-ranking figures. Some might be able to laugh at themselves. Others, lacking sufficient knowledge, simply laugh at what they see but fail to connect it to the lives of those outside their circles.
Dieudonné briefly elaborates on what he read by Jacob and Spinoza, whose writings he had access to in his father's library. But what really interests Barbier is that Dieudonné also mentions François de la Motte-le-Vayer and his great-grandfather's encounter with this important Parisian figure of the twentieth century. Dieudonné tells him what he heard from

his father.

They then discuss self-determination and education. Mathilde sneers that, of course, even uneducated scoundrels can make good decisions about themselves. Edmond Barbier smiles and remarks that he would be delighted to meet the young men again. He suggests they go and see the Peyrenc Hotel, next to the Hôtel des Invalides, and then have dinner at his house. So, early that afternoon, they spent some time exploring the hotel and its gardens, arriving at Rue Galande.

After greeting each other and sitting down, Edmond Barbier asks what they thought of Peyrenc's Hôtel. Dieudonné repeats what he said on the way there about the enormous difference between that displayed wealth and the filthy, impoverished life of the average Parisian.

"Even though we are not rich ourselves, we are still doing very well," Dieudonné states.

"And Peyrenc is a villain born of the life of a servant," says Edmond Barbier, after which he reads what he recently wrote in his diary: '*On the 20th of this month, we buried here a Peyrenc de Moras, 46 years old, master of requests and head of the Dowager Duchess's Council. This man, the son of a barber in the small town of Saintonge, had, after shaving others, made a good living for himself. After all, he came to Paris, a refuge for all sorts of people. He was already doing horse-trading in the public squares before the famous year 1720 of the Law system. Often, things went wrong rather than right, but he took few risks and threw himself wholeheartedly into the system. He was fortunate enough to be able to understand that. He had the kind of mind to know which*

paths to take in this country. And now he died with twelve to fifteen million in lands, furniture, precious stones, and shares in the Indian Company. He had the most beautiful house in Paris built in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. This alone illustrates how we govern ourselves. Here you see a man of nothing who, in two years, has become richer than princes. The fortune created by this unfortunate system is based on what two hundred individuals lost in family and acquired property after thirty years of work in various professions! This man, however, was left alone because he decided to distribute a million to the lords and gentlemen of the Court and was subsequently appointed to an honourable office in the magistrate's office. He leaves behind a widow and three children. His widow is the daughter of Fargès, a former army contractor, originally a soldier, who receives a pension of 500,000 pounds. His secret is that he failed to pay one of his creditors. More than one gentleman at court is already considering marrying the widow.'

Dieudonné and Mathilde appreciate Edmond Barbier's dry humor. They tell him that, coincidentally, on the day of Peyrenc's funeral, they signed the buying contract for their house in Lille at the notary, against the wishes of Mathilde's parents. Perhaps that's why the episode passed them by.

Edmond asks about Dieudonné's origins. When he says he was born in Ghent, but that his parents now live in Ostend, Barbier elaborates briefly on what he calls Ostend trade. He asks if Dieudonné knows that the original idea for the Ostend Company arose after a captain from St. Malo traded his cargo in Oostende. He has followed the Company's affairs and is also

convinced that the current ban has less to do with the acceptance of the Emperor's succession and more to do with the interests of other companies from other regions.

Afterwards, they talk with Barbier about the Little Schools. Dieudonné tells that his great-grandfather once visited Port-Royal before Louis XIV put an end to it. "I remember hearing my father say that Claudius Cardinalis and Wolfgang later visited the *Lettres Provinciales*. They discussed Blaise Pascal's work," he continues. "They tried to understand Augustine's contemporaries. It was one of many discussions between Frankfurt, Cologne, and Amsterdam. Claudius saw Pelagius as an early defender of children because he did not burden them with original sin. He was part of a group of thinkers who considered Pelagius' remark about the eyes '*You can look with them, but anyone can use them for good or bad*' interpreted as a basis for dialogic learning, to help guide free will ethically. From reading Pascal, Claudius deduced that this philosopher and physicist was intent on defending the followers of Jansenius and his interpretation of Augustine. According to Claudius, the texts testified to the resistance to the casuistry employed by the Jesuits and to the absolutist character of both the papal government in Rome and the king's government in France. The philosopher would therefore not so much be addressing an early Christian debate between Pelagius and Augustine, since free will also exists for Augustine. The point is that, for the Hippo theologian, the desire to avoid evil is not born out of fear of the devil, but out of motivation to act mindful of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, said the philosopher, doing good for the wrong reasons is a form of betrayal. That seems to be the catch

for those who still propose indulgences today, for those who want to act right out of fear of excommunication, or for those who determine what is good or bad from their position of power on earth."

Mathilde jumps in: "Our idea is that today we're seeing a political rather than a theological position. It seems to us that, partly due to the influence of lay Jansenists, an entire movement is absolutely convinced that secular power must not be subject to ecclesiastical power. Jansenists are said to reject ultramontanism. They are said to oppose the French Catholic Church's excessive reliance on the Pope. This, in turn, leads to the idea that anyone who opposes its own hierarchy could ultimately oppose any hierarchy. That, in turn, is dangerous for the established order, and that's why this movement must be kept under control, including in parliaments, as we often see here in Paris. Abbot Pucelle would be able to pull out all the stops on this matter if he hadn't retreated to Corbigny…"

Dieudonné continues: "Like many others, we too believe we are dealing with convinced Catholics who do everything they can to defend the original values of the church and the faith. Unlike the Jesuits, who come from aristocratic families, the members of that movement are not so concerned with personal power, but they do defend Christian dogma. The sympathy they receive from liberals and humanists is related to their opposition to absolutism, which can be interpreted as the enslavement of man by man. This probably also explains their popularity among the uneducated population, even if they don't fully grasp what it's all about."

Barbier doesn't think his younger guests' line of reasoning is

entirely unfounded. Then he looks at Dieudonné and remarks: "Oostende isn't far from Ypres, where Jansenius died almost a century ago. Did you study the *artes liberales* also in one of the Pedagogies of the University of Leuven?"

Dieudonné replies: "I studied primarily in Leiden and only stayed in Leuven twice for short periods for additional studies. During my first stay, I was able to attend Espenius' last lecture, one year before the legal scholar was forced to leave Leuven and fled to Amersfoort."

"So you have been instructed by those who were favourably disposed towards the thoughts of Jansenius and Reason," Barbier notes.

"That's true," Dieudonné replies. "And my reasoning is that Jansenius revived Augustinian thought primarily as a response to scholasticism, but in the spirit of the Council of Trent. Leuven takes a resolute stance against Lutherans and Calvinists. In my opinion, Jansenius not only wanted to counter the advance of the Reformation but also wanted to question the Jesuits' stance on the interpretation of Thomas Aquinas. It was only later that the theological dispute intensified into an opposition of the Thomistic stance to the Augustinian stance, including the issue of pardons. That dispute is almost a century old. Initially, I think your French Catholics were not very involved. If I remember correctly, the Society of Jesus was banned here for a while. Wasn't that what led to the founding of the *Congregatio Oratorii Iesu et Mariae* by Cardinal De Bérulle? The *Society of the Oratory of Jesus* becomes a rival of the *Society of Jesus* not only in Leuven, but also in France as soon as the latter is allowed again. In your country, Jean-

Ambroise Hauranne Abt de Saint-Cyran will take part in the *Oratorian* where he vilifies the followers of the doctrines of the Spanish Jesuit Molina. Richelieu is initially an ally of Bérulle but later gains the support of the Jesuits in what is no longer a theological dispute. The French court's desire for supremacy is the impetus for Saint-Cyran's followers to establish Port-Royal. The rivalry between the two societies is very lively, and the *Lettres Provinciales* Blaise Pascal's portrayal of the Jesuits as casuists and "molinists" is not always well received, even among Jansenists. Some feel that theological and secular disputes are being overlooked to give a negative image of the Jesuits' supposedly loose morals. As far as I know, the rest… *Lettres Provinciales* is not on the index for theological reasons, but because they offer the general public a satirical description in French of what would only concern scholars. When the church subsequently recognised a miracle that occurred in Port-Royal and was related to the healing of Blaise Pascal's sister, the whole matter ceased to be religious and became secular. It was about power. The members of the *Fronde*-movement made use of Port-Royal.

Meanwhile, my father and I think that the Little School that Claudius and Wolfgang often talked about is a sub-product of Port-Royal and not the essence of it. But still, the Court of Louis XIV wanted to put an end to it, in our opinion, for the sake of the *Fronde*-movement. What the court circles call Jansenists is in fact a movement of the wealthy bourgeoisie and the nobility, active primarily in the Parisian parliament.

"I think I can largely agree with you, friend. Also in Schools in Paris are sometimes attacked today. Wait, I wrote something

about this, I think in October 1730. Where is it again? Ah, here it is: "*There was a raid on the College Saint-Barbe, which, despite producing the best students in Paris and highly educated people, is said to have morals out of step with the times, because the clergy mentoring the young people are known as prominent Jansenists. The clergy was replaced, much to the dismay of the young people, who reportedly even threw stones at a Jesuit looking through one of the college windows. They tried to calm things down by giving the young people young chickens for dinner, something the longtime cook said had never happened in the last thirty years. The clergy were dismissed and ordered to withdraw from Paris. The next day and in the days that followed, many parents withdrew their children from the school. This whole affair caused a great deal of resentment in the Jansenist university district.*" I note that the entire movement called Jansenist today is more a movement of Parisian parliamentarians, accompanied by some of my colleagues who, among others, are causing work stoppages supported by the dean. This movement is linked to the absolute power of the King and his entourage, who want to restrict many people.

Dieudonné and Mathilde want to talk further about the *little schools* from Paris. Edmond Barbier has background information on Charles Tabourin's guidelines for the group *little schools* which are sometimes referred to as the Port-Royal legacy. Dieudonné and Mathilde immediately understand that the discipline is not very different from what La Salle proposes for the poor schools of the *Brothers of the Christian Schools*. Here too, all teachers in all schools must teach the same lessons at the same time. Therefore, they synchronise their watches daily with the clock in the study

hall of the community centre where they are staying. If, for some reason, a particular exercise is not completed on time, the students begin the next one to stay on time. They learn the routine required by Tabourin. Schools open at 7:30 a.m., and the children can have breakfast. Morning prayers follow at 8:00 a.m. Then the first lesson begins until 9:00 a.m., followed by a short prayer, and then writing until 10:00 a.m. This is followed by catechism until 10:30 a.m., after which the children go outside. At 1:00 p.m., half an hour is set aside for lunch, and then school begins again. Class runs from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m., and writing from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., after a short prayer. Afterward, there is time for another 30 minutes of catechism. In every reading lesson, reading must be done slowly and clearly, and instruction is given according to the established method. First, the names of the letters are learned, then syllables are read, and then words. Reading is important for being able to read pious books, which is why religious education is also crucial. To learn to write, students must, of course, learn to control their hand, and that takes time. The children are constantly supervised. It is said that the children who attend school there are fortunate because these *little schools*. A crossing between a monastery and a workshop. The children learn to love work. After class, they take care of their workshop together. They tidy up, sweep the classroom, and carefully wash the furniture. Just like in the schools of the *Brothers of the Christian Schools*. Here too, as little as possible is spoken. Sitting neatly in the pew, legs together and never crossed, is part of the norms. Punishment can consist of a spanking on the bottom, the whip, or the palm board. But, unlike at La Salle, the emphasis

here is on verbal reprimands or copying an adequate portion of the Old or New Testament. The children not only have the catechism but are also accompanied in their weekly Sunday Mass attendance. In all circumstances, the children must appear neat. Parents are reminded that clothes must be neatly buttoned, hands washed, hair combed, and nails trimmed. The poor school aims for a strict, austere education, which contrasts with the more affluent education in middle-class circles. Ultimately, it seems that Tabourin does not want to attract too much attention with his poor schools or to stay far outside the boundaries of the schools under the authority of the Cantor of Notre-Dame and the *Schools of the Christian Brothers*. This puts the entire Port-Royal project of combining the Cartesian spirit with Christian pedagogy in jeopardy.
When Dieudonné and Mathilde bring this up and present Edmond Barbier with Dieudonné's parents' educational ideas, Barbier keeps a law profile. He listens attentively but offers no further comment. At the end of the evening, they part amicably, promising to continue writing to each other.

After their marriage, there are increasing indications that Mathilde's free-spirit is making the couple enemies. There is a real danger that they will be falsely accused of belonging to the Jansenists. Their visit to St. Médard to witness with their own eyes the spectacle of the miracles of the convulsions on the tombstone of Sieur Pâris certainly contributes to this. They choose an inopportune time. They are at the cemetery in the Faubourg Saint Marceau at precisely the moment when the secret informants of Lieutenant General of the Paris Police René

Hérault are very active there. That same month, it becomes known that a collection of clandestine *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* to have been found at the home of Saffres-de-Montbard. That magazine is attributed to the Jansenists. Everyone knows that René Hérault makes it a kind of personal matter to dismantle the network of writers and printers. Moreover, Dieudonné continues to discuss the ideas that John and Marianne propose in every salon conversation. The way in which the young couple defend the Lesmeisters' *Opus Omnia* raises their suspicions even further. They are both labeled as seditious. The young people themselves find all this enjoyable and adventurous, but during their salon conversations, their friends remind them that while seditious individuals from the upper classes may end up in the rather comfortable Bastille, others face a less fortunate fate. If Mathilde were captured, she might be able to assert her family name, but for Dieudonné, though married to her, confinement in a harsher prison or compulsory exile seems likely. And they are advised not to risk that fate, especially now that they are expecting their first child. Dieudonné's employers suggest the couple to leave Paris and settle in Lille. The capital of the *Intendance de Flandre*, often still called Walloon Flanders, has now grown into a substantial city of around 60,000 inhabitants. Sieur Saffres-de-Montbard can mediate the purchase of a pleasant bourgeois house in a recently developed neighbourhood incorporated into the urban expansion project initiated by Vauban. It's a comfortable three-story house in the Paroisse de la Magdelaine, near the quays of the Basse Deûle. This was the purchase they briefly discussed with Edmond

Barbier. They now want to move there as soon as possible. Mathilde wants to write and hold a salon outside the capital. Dieudonné was recommended by Madame Saffres-de-Montbard as a preceptor to a family friend. He also wants to try his luck as a teacher at the Lille *Collège Municipal*, but he won't succeed but after some time. The school is run by the Jesuits. Dieudonné will be accepted after a series of fortuitous events, which we'll bring up later.

Although Mathilde is heavily pregnant, they don't want to delay the trip to Lille any longer. They'll feel more at ease if their child is born far from Paris. There, their less appreciated pronouncements won't cause as much of a stir as they would in the circles that move within the intrigue-filled spheres of the Court. They'll be under less pressure there.

With all due caution, the young couple undertakes the journey to Lille during the second week of December of that year. Fortunately, the weather has been exceptionally dry so far, considering the water level of the Seine in Paris. Family friends lend them a comfortable carriage with a coachman, which they have free use of. This allows them to travel at their own pace, one day more than the four days required by the stagecoach. They leave Paris via the Faubourg du Temple to reach Vilette. From Vilette, they continue via Le Bourget and Vaudherland to the Louvres, where they stop for lunch. After Survilliers and La Chapelle-en-Serval, they head towards Pontamé, where they have to cross the Thève River. Towards evening, they arrive in Senlis, where they spend the night with friends of Mathilde's parents, who have a small hunting lodge on the Nonette River.

The next day, the journey continues with well-rested horses to Pont-Sainte-Maxence. Here they cross the Oise River. At the invitation of a member of the Parlement of Paris who owns a castle in Saint-Martin-Longueau, they have lunch there. Afterwards, they continue to Gournay-sur-Aronde, where they can spend the night comfortably and the horses can also get the necessary rest in one of the inns available. Mathilde is delighted to be spending the night in the birthplace of Marie de Gournay, who published some seventy years ago *L'égalité des hommes et des femmes* in which she argues for the principle of equal instruction for women and men, to give women the same status as men.

On the third day, they travel towards Crapeaumansil. For a while, they follow the Matz River. In Roye, they have a late lunch. Towards the end of the day, they cross the Somme, just before Peronne. There, they spent the night with a distant cousin of Madame Saffres-de-Montbard.

In good spirits, the couple resumes their journey the following day. Around noon, they arrive in Cambrai, where they have dinner and the horses are refreshed. After lunch, another three hours of driving awaits them to Douai. There they will spend their last night before reaching their final destination. The coachman explains that they have to cross the Sensée River by ferry in Aubigny and that he doesn't know exactly how long this will take. Ultimately, it's quite late when they arrive in Douai. They have no trouble finding the home of a professor from the University of Douai with whom Dieudonné has been corresponding for some time and who is delighted to be able to

invite his pen pal and his wife to stay with him on their journey to Lille.

During dinner the conversation turns to Dieudonné's chances of obtaining a position in Lille's *Collège Municipal.* His host believes that the fact that Dieudonné studied in Leiden is not necessarily a handicap. In the academic world, of course, there are very closed and dogmatic figures, also in Catholic Walloon Flanders. The Reformation never had much influence here, which is why, at the time of the annexation to France, the citizens were rather hostile to Louis XIV until he issued the Edict of Fontainebleau. But Dieudonné is not interested in theology, but rather in ethics and philosophy. Dieudonné also explains that he is interested in providing a solid education for future schoolmasters. His host knows that there is currently a shortage of such teachers in Lille, and also of good preceptors given the rapidly growing population. Since the city became the capital of the *Intendance of Flanders,* more magistrates are settling there, often seeking a quality education for their children, with less emphasis on theological quibbles. Meanwhile, he suggests to Dieudonné that he consider studying for a while at the College La Flèche. When Dieudonné asks in surprise what he would do there, his host replies that it would greatly increase his chances of quickly settling into Lille. Mathilde doesn't think the idea is so unreasonable.

The travellers are assured that the journey from Douai to Lille will almost certainly take no more than five hours. It has been daylight for some time when they leave Douai. They hope to reach their destination sometime in the afternoon. When they

arrive at the Pont de Beuvry, Mathilde announces that they are now truly in Walloon Flanders. The journey indeed goes quite smoothly, and it is normally just beginning to get dark as they enter the city at the Porte des Malades. Along Rue des Malades and a short detour through Rue des Tanneurs and Rue Neuve, they continue along Rue Esquermoise to Rue Royale. There they turn into Rue Française. They cross the Pont Neuf and arrive at Rue des Carmes. The servant and his wife, who had traveled ahead of them, have prepared the house. A large fire burns in the fireplace. Both immediately feel at home in this inviting dwelling.

Unexpected and unwanted publications

The residents of Lille like to consider their city the capital of Walloon Flanders and are attached to their Flemish history. This doesn't mean that Flemish is spoken there, as is the case in Maritime Flanders.

Immediately after the War of Devolution and the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle of 1668, the mood was rather hostile. This was partly due to uncertainty about the policies of the French king, to whom Protestant sympathies were attributed. Furthermore, there was fear that the city would lose its privileges. Since the Burgundians several centuries earlier, and until recently with the Spanish crown and its representatives, the city dwellers had been able to exert considerable influence. The French monarch clearly demonstrated his desire to centralise the administration. Dieudonné and Mathilde soon began to associate frequently with the lawyer Pierre Lacour, the son of a family friend of Mathilde's parents. He told them how, until the turn of the century, rebellious writings, pamphlets, and speeches regularly surfaced, such as those of his then-confrere Desruelles. Lacour had claimed that '*he would prefer to still be under the domination of the King of Spain and see the last of the French dead*'. Although he was first imprisoned and then banished from the city, the then-Central Government ultimately had to make concessions because the city's inhabitants clearly showed they would not accept this. Relations with the French ruler improved not so much because of the Edict of Fontainebleau, as many had assumed, but mainly as a result of the wartime misery during

the Little War. The armies of the alliance of Prussian princes, Austrian Habsburgs, Stuarts, and the House of Orange-Nassau then lined up against those of the House of Bourbon and its allies. As always in these kinds of conflicts, border regions were hard-hit. The heavily walled city of Lille, like the entire border region, then bore the brunt of armies and mercenaries from both sides. After 1710, animosity towards the Dutch mercenaries gradually increased. Furthermore, just as on the French side, there were peasants, recruited into soldiers through lottery and quibbling, who also made the region unsafe during the sieges. Their military leadership also fueled growing animosity. He too often gave orders to burn down villages and parts of towns when the city administrators did not immediately meet their demands for supplies of horses and food.

These events were all relatively recent. The Utrecht Peace Accords once again shifted the boundaries of the Aachen Accords, concluded only half a century earlier. Maritime Flanders now definitively came under the rule of the French House of Bourbon. The areas around Tournai, Veurne, Ypres, and Charleroi now came under the control of *Belgium Austriacum*. Even today, there is often unrest in the border region between the Austrian Netherlands and France, especially in the coastal area near Dunquerque. And although the citizens of Lille gradually come to regard themselves as French subjects, everyone today views the policies of Louis XV with considerable reservation. He wants to rule as an absolute monarch, following the example of his great-grandfather. The all-powerful Cardinal Le Fleury and his entire entourage support him in this.

This is the social climate that Dieudonné Lemaître and Mathilde Larouge found in Lille when they settled there about a month before the birth of little Yann, after the Paris situation became too hot for them, partly as a result of their criticism of the same entourage of the same Cardinal.

And then there is that different climate. The weather in Lille differs from that of Paris. The entire region has been known since time immemorial as an area where it almost always rains. Usually a drizzle, but also frequent heavy downpours with significant flooding. The marshy Leie plain has been a kind of language barrier for almost a thousand years. Dutch dialects had no chance south of the river. North and west of it, the reverse is also true. Picard and French barely gained a foothold.
The wet climate has slowed the development of good overland roads. In France, a better road network has only been developed in recent years, particularly to the interior and to Paris. However, many roads are still a series of potholes where carts sink up to their axles. This makes serving smaller hamlets and farms difficult. However, as in the Low Countries, there is a good network of waterways. The Lys, the Deûle, and the Scarpe are part of this network and are heavily used, resulting in significant quay activity. During the week, Lille is the scene of a constant stream of porters and ox carts transporting cargo between Basse-Deûle, near Mathilde and Dieudonné's house, and Haute-Deûle, beyond the Esplanade and the Porte de La Barre.

In Maritime Flanders, the language of instruction in the Little School is still Latin, supplemented by Dutch and sometimes a bit of French. Many parishes have a partially free Little School

supplemented by tuition. As elsewhere, there are three rates, depending on the skills taught: reading, writing, and arithmetic. These are usually Sunday schools. Here and there, there are also day schools for the poor. The Little Schools are primarily parish-run, but the pastors are closely involved and have the right to inspect the lessons. The schoolmasters themselves are usually lay people who have little in common. Kassel, Wormhoudt, and Dunkirk have literate teachers who know Latin and French. Some are writers, and a few even write poetry. In Kassel, in 1714, teacher Andries Steven published *The New Dutch Prescription Book*. Dieudonné owns a copy. Other teachers have this work as a sideline and are sexton, cantor, and bell ringer. Farmers also take on this role, as in the region the school is usually only open when there is little work in the fields.
Since the 1920s, there have been attempts to raise the standard of teacher training. One reason is to make French common in both Maritime and Walloon Flanders. In Lille, the auxiliary language for Latin is often still Picard language. Meanwhile, Dieudonné learned that, just as in Paris, the Jesuits were advocating Little School in Latin and French. Children were encouraged to speak the other language when not in school — that is, French — and not Dutch or Picard language. This is a logical consequence of the merger of Maritime and Walloon Flanders under the administration of the *Intendance of Flanders*.

Once Yann is a little older, Dieudonné and Mathilde participate in the city's cultural offerings. They become regulars at the *Comédie* near the town hall. Mathilde quickly expands her circle of acquaintances among the local bourgeois women. She

successfully organised her first salon afternoon, soon followed by a second. She then adapted the salon afternoon to a salon evening with supper. Initially, Mathilde was careful not to broach topics or use language that could be perceived as provocative. She quickly became known for her lively and spiritual interventions.

From her sister, she receives an enthusiastic letter in which she writes about her meeting with Émilie Du Châtelet, who is now a regular companion of Voltaire. Mathilde's sister speaks of Émilie's extraordinary intelligence. It is said that she sought out Maupertuis to learn mathematics because, as a woman, she was denied access to higher education. She wants to master geometry, algebra, calculus, and the natural sciences.

Mathilde reads almost everything by Émilie du Châtelet with growing interest. She comes across her translation of Bernard de Mandeville's satirical The Bee Fable. In the introduction, Mathilde reads: *'Let us pause for a moment to consider why, for so many centuries, has no good tragedy, a good poem, a valued story, a beautiful painting, or a good book on physics ever emerged from the hands of women? Why are these beings, whose understanding resembles that of men in every way, nevertheless held back by an insurmountable barrier? Someone, if possible, gives me a reason. I leave it to naturalists to seek a physical explanation, but until they find one, women have the right to claim their education. As for me, I admit that, were I king, I would undertake this physics experiment. I would reform an abuse that, so to speak, cuts off half of humanity. I would allow women to participate in everything humanity is entitled to, especially where the mind is concerned. It*

seems as if women were born to deceive; little else is left to their souls. The new education I am thinking of would do the human race much good in every respect. Women would be better off, and men would gain a new imitation; Our way of acting, which today, by polishing it, too often weakens and narrows our minds, would then serve to expand their knowledge as well. I am convinced that many women ignore their talents, either because of the inadequate education or because they are buried under prejudices and a lack of spiritual courage. What I have noticed in myself reinforces this opinion. By chance, I was introduced to literary friends, and I saw with great surprise that they paid some attention to my mind. I then began to believe that I was a thinking being. But I only caught a glimpse of it myself. And the world, the debauchery for which I only believed I was born, filled all my time, carrying my entire soul with it. I only truly believe it now, admittedly still in time to become reasonable, but no longer to acquire talents.'

Mathilde and Dieudonné have a long conversation about these words. Émilie is only a few years older than Mathilde. She says she would very much like to meet her. For that, she might have to go to Paris. Their friend Pierre Lacour strongly advises her against it. Émilie is Voltaire's friend — it is increasingly said that she is his mistress — and Voltaire has just found himself in dire straits again. The Parlement of Paris has ordered the burning of his *Lettres Philosophiques*. People see it as an indirect attack on the monarchy. And from their friends in Paris, Mathilde and Dieudonné know that they themselves are still accused of seditious behaviour and Jansenism.

Dieudonné and Mathilde have been in Lille for almost two

years when they learn from Mathilde's sister that Chevalier de Ramsey has an interesting young English guest staying with him. He is traveling from Reims to La Flèche. His name is David Hume. He is staying for a few days at the Hôtel de Sully. *Sieur* Saffres-de-Montbard also writes to Dieudonné about Hume's visit and believes that his ideas would certainly interest him. He seems to have a fairly thorough knowledge of Newton's work and brings a fresh perspective to the natural sciences. He is discussed in several salons.

Dieudonné and Mathilde had already considered leaving Lille for a short time to gain new knowledge. They also want to spread their ideas further. Dieudonné is in contact with two mentors at the Jesuit college. They recommend him to take a year of philosophy courses at La Flèche. Afterward, he can almost certainly be nominated as a lay teacher in Lille. Dieudonné doesn't hide the fact that, with everything he now knows about it, he would love to visit La Flèche. He has read about and by some controversial former students. There are not only legendary figures like Descartes, Mersenne, or Picard. He is also familiar with contemporary publicists, such as Abbé Prévost. He enjoyed reading the recently published first two volumes of his new periodical *Le pour et le contre (The pros and cons)*.

Mathilde encourages the plan. She herself is eager to secure an invitation to spend some time in Cirey. Emilie de Châtelet has settled in her husband's castle there. Voltaire is now an almost permanent guest and largely finances the castle's reconstruction. Together with friends, they further develop their plan.

Temporary lodgings are needed in Cirey for Mathilde, Yann, and his nurse, who also works as Mathilde's assistant. Dieudonné uses letters of recommendation to find lodgings within the Henri IV College facilities.
Shortly thereafter, two events would help them make a decision. On the one hand, Dieudonné receives a recommendation from his contemporary, Jean-Baptiste Gresset. Gresset was a non-ordained member of the Society and taught at La Flèche. The two engaged in a somewhat irregular correspondence after Jean-Baptiste Rousseau discussed Gresset's literary work with Mathilde's father, who in turn discussed it with his daughter. On the other hand, Émilie had a small circle of mathematicians and natural philosophers who often spent several weeks at her castle, not only to further her mathematical knowledge but also for the pleasure of attending the literary sessions, which demonstrated her intelligence and liveliness. One of the guests is an old friend of Mathilde's. She offers to accompany her. It is agreed that the small family would travel by carriage to Cirey, accompanied by Yann's nurse. From there, Dieudonné would depart on horseback for La Flèche. On the way he will be joined by a former Parisian colleague who will join him in Troyes.

The young people reaffirm that they are primarily concerned with further debating their own ideas. Although they themselves lead relatively comfortable lives, they are daily reminded of the vast differences between their lives and those of ordinary people. In Lille, and before that in Paris, it's really not difficult to see how people live just by strolling through the old city. They vividly recall the scenes they witnessed in Paris, such as those

between bickering water carriers and servants of wealthy families without their own water supply at the few public fountains. They also remember young children trying to earn some money by selling kindling amid a sea of shabby street vendors. Paris had some 400 coffeehouses the year they left. Yet, these were only open to citizens and men holding public office with a decent salary. Working days of fourteen or more hours leave the poorest and some craftspeople little time to maintain a vegetable garden outside the city walls. The situation in Lille is not very different. Perhaps poorer people here have more opportunities to have a small vegetable garden or even keep a few chickens.

Dieudonné is surprised that it takes so long for the *potato* is gaining traction here. The tuber has amply demonstrated its nutritional value during sea voyages. Across the border, just a few miles from Lille, the plant is gradually being cultivated in all the provinces of the Low Countries. It is a good alternative to bread. Yet, the tuber remains virtually unknown in the French empire. Farmers do cultivate the plant, but primarily as pig feed. Only the very poorest are familiar with it. You only need a cooking pot, while making bread takes longer and also has to be baked. His friends listen in disbelief to stories about the potato dishes his grandparents had already included in their weekly diet. Dieudonné and Mathilde consider this a striking example of how ignorance, partly due to a lack of education and partly due to a lack of information disseminated across borders, ultimately disadvantages the common people more than the wealthy citizens and the old and new aristocracy.

Dear Mathilde,

I miss you, and our boy too. What makes the loss somewhat more bearable is that I read and write a lot here. As I told you in my previous letter, Pierre de Charlevoix is a well-traveled and well-read man. Although I don't always agree with his conclusions, the historical descriptions he shares with us are a rich source of information. The more I learn about the seizure of the American territories, the better I understand how the Europeans, in the name of various royal houses, always presented themselves as superior and asserted that superiority by enslaving those living in those territories. In the Indian Empire and the Chinese Empire, too, people do present themselves as superior, but relations with local rulers don't have the absolute dominance they do in Africa and the New World. No one here knows much about New Holland except through correspondence.

We've often discussed the Res Publica Litteraria these past few days, following the death of Thomas Hearne. In his case, you could call the Res Publica Litteraria, with a French pun, La République des lettres and not literature.

We both know full well that without letter writers like Thomas Hearne, the dissemination of new ideas and discoveries by thinkers and scientists would be different. Only now did I understand the reason for his reclusive existence. He belonged to the so-called nonjurors. This is the group of monks who, after the accession of William III in the late 1780s, refused to swear allegiance to the monarch who had deposed James II. This made him a cell monk. Do you remember hearing about Hearne from Abbé Prevost, among others? That he was forced out of the library after 1716 with a kind of internal exile? Anyone who visits Oxford knows that

he held important auxiliary positions until then. His freedom of movement as a historian had already been limited, and even more so after he was forced to resign from his position as second librarian. And yet, he contributed so much to the dissemination of information about published and unpublished works by researchers, historians, philosophers, and natural philosophers.

But to talk about the Republic of Letters, Mathilde, I find it encouraging to know that the group is doing well and that more and more brilliant minds and supporting scholars are exchanging letters. Most see their publications as a tribute to the Res publica litteraria.

Even better. I also find professors and fellow students here aiming to conduct discussions about discoveries and new knowledge in a civilised and moderated manner. They reiterate that there is a kind of unwritten law within the community. You are only part of it if you want to be, and if you are not guided by local or national identities, but simply by your desire to contribute to the development of humanity. It's a kind of antithesis to the Royal Academies, they say here. Those often prioritise the interests of the State, even if that isn't explicitly stated. Mathilde, the Republic of Letters remains a haven, a place to conduct discussions without being aggressive or condescending. If women were more involved, it would take on the form of cosmopolitanism we highly value, which is based on a willingness to listen to others and to know that others are also willing to listen to you. It's not a unity within a single dogma. That's much closer. Although the Society of Jesus likes to present its own cosmopolitan affiliation, many of its members are nevertheless very intolerant of those who believe differently. There are exceptions. I'm meeting a few here at La Flèche. I'll ask my parents if they, too, will dedicate their Opus Omnia to the Republic of Letters. This will increase contact with those who think about

instruction, upbringing, and the dissemination of knowledge, and will help others see more clearly the connections between a sense of power, science, arrogance, and ignorance.
I hug you, dear Mathilde, and look forward with joy to your next letter,
Your Dieudonné.

Dear Dieudonné,

I can't help but be delighted that you can continue to enrich your and our knowledge at La Flèche. I miss you too. Sometimes I just want to talk to you about what I hear here in Cirey, just like we've been doing since we met, there at Place Royal, remember?
I completely agree with you, my dear, that the Republic of Letters remains an interesting phenomenon. The Academy often makes its members arrogant. In our case, I think, this certainly has to do with the idea of French greatness that is maintained there. It's sad to think that the defense of the language against Latin as a means of disseminating knowledge quickly degenerated into the creation of an artificial "race of the French". Perhaps the more literary salonnières, like Madame de Tencin, for example, play a role among us in making the discussion less dogmatic and more cosmopolitan. But still. Whether cosmopolitans in France are less French-oriented is, of course, the question. It doesn't always seem to me to be beneficial for French scholars themselves that French often replaces Latin as the vehicular language. No one would really expect it to be a new international language, regardless of the power games between the ruling royal houses. These days, the central government strongly fosters people's natural sense of regional belonging. It's cleverly twisted into the artificial sense of belonging to a nation, even here in the Frankish Empire. Some even invent a ridiculous story for it, turning former rulers and

warriors into some kind of legendary founders of the nation. Still, by God's grace, of course. I do see the point, here and elsewhere. The Court Entourage has an interest in the people of a region feeling eternally connected to a reigning princely house, whether the Prince rules are absolute or enlightened. In this case, compulsory instruction for the poor isn't necessarily a good thing. Perhaps you could discuss this with your fellow students and fellow students when you discuss our idea of the universal knowledge-spreading school?
I'm doing well here, and Yann is happy with his nurse and his mother. He says a few words and paces our rooms briskly. It looks like I'll be staying here until the fall. I received a letter from my parents. They're thinking of coming to Cirey by carriage after the summer, and then we can ride back to Lille together. I received a message from our friend Pierre that our house has been well maintained by our loyal staff. He sent me a statement of the accounts and assures me that he has sufficient credit from us to properly manage the house until my return. So you don't have to worry about that any more. He also proudly announced that he has become the father of a daughter.
I hug you, darling, and send you a kiss from our boy,
Forever yours Mathilde.

Dear Mathilde,

What a joyful feeling wells up in my heart every time I see a new letter from you waiting for me at the doorman's.
How are you doing? What words does our little Yann say? I wonder if he'll still recognise his father when we're reunited in Lille.
Mathilde, last week I had my first conversation with that young Englishman, David Hume, whom we'd already heard about. He's from Edinburgh, Scotland. He says he was destined to become a

lawyer. He reminded me, if only briefly, of our friend Barbier. He ended up here in La Flèche because, as he puts it, he embarked on a journey of self-discovery some time ago. He briefly explored commerce, but he felt even less suited to that than to law. Ultimately, he says, there are only two things that fascinate him: philosophy and knowledge in general. I think that's why he tries to find a balance between being a philosopher and a natural philosopher. Considering he's 26, his erudition is considerable. It's an intellectual pleasure to sit down with him. I was quite delighted when I heard that he once took lessons from former students of Isaac Newton himself. He admits to considering Newton one of his masters, but it certainly doesn't stop there. What strikes me is that, in the spirit of the Republic of Letters, you could say, he mentions Rene Descartes and also Algazelus as influences in his thinking.

We were talking about cause and effect, and you can sense how David views that relationship from different perspectives. He says he's writing a thesis on this, and I'm very curious to see the outcome.

The College itself may be in a bit of a decline. I have the impression that the College of Clermont in Paris is starting to gain ground on the Henri IV College here, and that may have something to do with the fact that the Jesuit students are increasingly sons of the bourgeoisie, high-ranking officials, and even major merchants, and much less of the aristocracy and nobility. This isn't just the case in Paris and here, but, I believe, everywhere the Jesuits have colleges. Of course, there are gradually more colleges, so the students are dispersed to more cities. Nevertheless, the College here still has a great reputation, and students still come from all over the kingdom and from abroad. One of the pleasant aspects is that we are all residents here, which certainly enhances the opportunity for discussion and exchange of ideas. But our professors never fail to

point out that since the beginning of this century, the number of students has only been declining. If I'm not mistaken, there are currently just over 600 of us here.

As I mentioned in my previous letter, it's good to know that several lecturers here also publish in honour of the Republic. Some contribute to the Journal des Sçavans. I was reminded of what my father told me about Grandfather Pieter, who, like his friend Claudius, often read these kinds of publications. They found in Cologne, when religious tensions were even higher than they are today, that colleagues were persuaded not to read just any periodical. I've now understood from the most erudite professors that for them, today, religion plays only a minor role in their reading choices. Language plays a greater role. There is, however, some concern in the academic world that the greater dissemination of knowledge in these kinds of journals, despite everything, increases the temptation to portray those born or working in their own region as more intellectually developed than those born or working abroad. I sincerely hope that the salonnières will pay sufficient attention to what's happening abroad.

I wrote to my parents about the Republic of Letters, and the reply didn't take long. My father asked if I hadn't read his preface, in which he offers their work as a tribute to everyone who holds the Republic of Letters deeply in their hearts. I could have kicked myself for even reading about it. Moreover, one of the students I hang out with quite often, pointed out the reference to me even before I received my parents' reply. My father and mother are very discreet. I had no idea that their intensive correspondence with half the European world, and even beyond, is entirely dedicated to that informal connection between thinkers and scholars.

The next days I'm going The department of the Collège Royal for the instruction of poor children in Sablé-sur-Sarthe. Today, that

school is an institution overseen by Sieur Colbert de Torcy. He spends the rest of his time on the renovations of his castle, which he closely follows. I learned from him that he is also a knight of the Order of the Honey fly of the Duchess of Maine and that he experienced the first series Great Nights of Sceaux. *You really have to wonder if there are any high-ranking officials who weren't seduced by Anne-Louise-Bénédicte de Bourbon to participate in her festive salon gatherings. I've been told not to expect too much from the school.*
I hug you tightly, my dear wife,
Your Dieudonné.

My dear husband and life companion,

So, my absent-minded darling. So you didn't even realise that the Republic of Letters isn't unknown in your family. When you mentioned it in your previous letter, I thought you knew the preface to your parents' Opus Omnia and suggested a clearer reference. But in the end, you simply overlooked it.
Little Yann is very interested in everything that moves in the garden. He chases birds and butterflies. He also loves looking at the paintings that brighten up the rooms and asks the names of the painted objects by pointing at them with his finger. And don't worry. I talk to him every day about his father, who, like us, is away but will return later. And I regularly show him the locket with your portrait that I always keep nearby.
New guests arrived in Cirey last week. That immediately means fresh news from the capital. This time it was about Georges Frederic Strass. Remember how we once talked about the widow Prévost's studio, which is so popular with those looking for affordable, fashionable jewellery? This was possible, in part, because Strass, with the crystal he specially developed, can so effectively imitate diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. This skill made

him famous. Since last year, he has had his own studio on the Quai des Orfèvres and is the King's preferred jeweller. He now also has his own hallmark: a crowned sword beneath the letters GFS. Of course, everyone can now speculate about who wears real and who wears fake jewellery at Court. A story our friend Barbier will probably appreciate.

My dear husband, you can understand my joy when you know that our Marquise de Châtelet counts Thérèse Geoffrin among her new guests. Do you remember? We met her at Madame de Tencin's and had an interesting conversation about the education of girls and women. I spent an afternoon with her now. As you may recall, she has her own modest salon on Rue Saint-Honoré, but she is often at Madame de Tencin's. She tells me that her husband objects to her salon activities, which naturally entail expenses. She is, like us, interested in everything said and written about the Republic of Letters. Her salon, she says, tends more towards literary and natural philosophy than the festive gatherings of the salons of the high aristocracy.

That's also the tone of Émilie's meetings, although she proudly declares herself a Knight in the Order of the Honey fly. That's why she likes to go to Sceaux whenever possible. Émilie is clearly more comfortable in that aristocratic world than Thérèse. Besides, she seems to me as someone who could belong anywhere. I think you know she also frequents Versailles. Say what you will about Sieur Voltaire, and I agree with you, he's too arrogant for my liking, and not always as clever as he thinks he is. But he does support Madame de Châtelet very much in her studies. I heard that he interested her even more in the work of Isaac Newton, so much so that she now wants to learn more mathematics as well.

Shortly after meeting Voltaire, she pulled off something unprecedented at the Café Gradot on the Quai de l'École. She

entered dressed as a man to reason with the mathematicians, physicists, and astronomers present, including Maupertuis. She told us this with a laugh, and she's pleased that she so thoroughly debunked the absurd rules that forbid women from some cafés. Sometimes she seems like a kind of modern-day Hypatia. Why do men continue to assume that a woman who enters a café only goes there with the intention of renting out her body, while women simply want to participate in the conversation, as they do in salons?

I can't always follow Émilie in her mathematical reflections, but I do understand that in the discussion about the shape of the Earth, she takes Newton's position, not that of the Cartesian Cassini. According to Newton, the world isn't really a sphere, but is flattened at the poles as a result of universal gravitation. What I do understand from the discussion is that there's a certain opposition between pure reasoning and generalisation based on local observation. I wonder if discussions don't become sterile if they're too antagonistic. Perhaps the debate will end when scientists succeed in funding expeditions to a location near the equator and a second location as close as possible to the Earth's North Pole to take measurements.

Sometimes I think we live in a fascinating world and that Yann will be able to discover so much that we're gradually getting a better understanding of. I had a good laugh yesterday when Fontenelle's comedy The Comet *was read aloud. It is a refreshing critique of the superstition surrounding horoscopes and almanacs. Will we ever be able to separate morality and ethics from superstitious and beatific religious practice? Or is that too much to ask? Perhaps your sister and her friend Begga de Bruges could share their thoughts on this with us.*

I hug you, dear absent-minded man.

Dear parents, sister and brother,

I'm still writing to you from La Flèche. As I told you in my previous letter, Mathilde and Yann are staying in Cirey. In a few weeks, they'll start their journey back to Lille, accompanied by Mathilde's parents, who will be living with her until I return. They're still somewhat angry about our decision to marry without their consent, but Yann is a good conciliator. Mathilde is quite confident that when I get home, there will at least be an opportunity to talk things over. Her parents are mainly convinced that our family is inferior compared to theirs, but that has more to do with my former employment as a preceptor for a family they consider their equal. Mathilde laughs and says her family is a good example of how the bourgeoisie imitates the aristocracy when they criticise a family's place in a hierarchy invented by other families. Of course, no one likes to hear that, because everyone has something to imitate. Generally speaking, it's fair to say that rank and status here have more to do with origins than with money, while in the Low Countries, origins and money are more likely to be considered equal. What everyone seems to agree on, consciously or unconsciously, Mathilde and I observe, is that the rest of the population, not to mention important artisans, is always considered inferior.

In her last letter, Mathilde, following a comedy by Fontenelle about superstition, raised the issue of the distinction between morality, ethics, and beatific superstition in religious practice. She asked if Maria and Begga would be willing to discuss this with us.

Here in La Flèche, I'm having conversations with interesting people, including a certain David Hume. He's four years younger than me and very well-read. He introduced me to the work of some of his inspiring masters. It's come in handy now, Father, that I browsed your library, and that you showed me so many of Grandfather

Pieter's notes before I left. I understood from your previous letter that you were revising your Opera Omnia *and could make excellent use of the legacy of books you received from Cologne at the time. David admits that the thinking of Locke, Descartes, and Newton influences his own work, but he is also influenced by several Eastern thinkers, including the rather mystical Algazelus. Naturally, I had to mention Zera Yacob. Although a Jesuit was involved in Yacob's exile after he declared that he could not consider any religion superior to another, serious historians in La Flèche want to argue this point. Sometimes you get the impression that it's possible to separate religion from science, but it's far from obvious.*

We discussed, among other things, the difference between the dismissive and even threatening attitude of Locke and Descartes toward atheists and the agnostic, investigative spirit of Zera Yacob's method of discussing Sacred Scripture. I remembered, Father, what you told me about your conversations with your grandmother Hildegarde and the correspondence between Grandfather Pieter and Claudius. So I was able to participate quite well in this philosophical debate with theological overtones. David is very committed to writing a work in which he wants to explore how we as humans view reality. "What is reality?", "What is reason?", "What are experience and perception?" are, of course, pertinent questions in this regard. He reflects on the different ways in which cause and effect are treated and also tries to determine what the first objects are effects of. I don't underestimate that these are important perspectives for every philosopher, and I would even say, for every natural philosopher as well. People are searching for the truth about the reality of the world, and this also sheds a constant light on our morals and ethics. For me, this is where the debate about religious and moral experience lies, and how the two overlap.

And here you see the greatness of thought of the more gifted professors of the Society of Jesus. One of my professors gave me a recently published work to read. It is by Antonius Guilielmus Amo Afer and is entitled De humanae mentis apatheia. *Folks, I hope you've already gotten your hands on Amo's work. Be sure to read it. It's his dissertation for his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Wittenberg. In it, he discusses his view on the absence of feeling in the human mind and its presence in the biological and living body. He considers both Cartesian dualism and the materialist view, and opposes Cartesian dualism. You can speak of a spirit or soul, he says, but it is the body that perceives and feels, not the spirit. That seems to me a refreshing philosophical approach to the human condition. When I read this, I thought of a conversation with David Hume. I see some similarities with his attempted approach to the human condition, as he discussed it with us during one of our student meetings. It seems quite clear to me that David rejects a dogmatic approach to the spirit or soul based solely on faith, without rejecting faith itself. But he believes that if we want to develop the science of humanity or of being human, we must use reason and experience as analytical tools. The mind is then subject to the same laws of cause and effect as anything else. And that's important when we think about the Self. During introspection, we might see ourselves as a unified mind resulting from a whole of experiences and relationships between experiences. Does this mean that the Self of today isn't the Self of five years ago? He quickly admits that he hasn't quite figured it out yet and that his own reasoning doesn't entirely satisfy him. He promises us a text for the coming years that he bills as a complete treatise on human nature.*

But I want to return to Antonius Guilielmus Amo Afer, or simply Amo Afer. The man interests me deeply for other reasons. As a four-

year-old child, he was shipped from Axim in Ghana to Amsterdam by the Dutch West India Company and given as a present — imagine! — to the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. Apparently, the Duke held somewhat different moral and ethical values than the West India Company's traders and he ensured that the boy could study alongside his own children. Six years ago, Amo completed his studies at the University of Halle's law faculty by submitting his dissertation De iure Maurorum in Europa. *I understand that he currently teaches at the University of Wittenberg, where he later received his degree in philosophy.*

Dear friends, Mathilde and I have often brought your Opus Omnia to the attention of those interested in education and training. We maintain that ignorance is not a condition, but the consequence of a lack of proper education. Anyone who philosophises about cause and effect should be able to see this. And I personally believe that reading the writings of those who come from regions commonly referred to here as Barbary, Dumps, or other derogatory names, and have been able to study, is the best proof of the untenability of the thesis that there are different kinds of people, from different origins, some more susceptible to study and reason than others. Even those who are so eager to mock superstition and prejudice often refuse to acknowledge this. Unfortunately, we hear all too often, here in Cirey, as well as back then in the salons in Paris, how guests who consider themselves highly literate continue to defend the existence of different kinds of people. I don't understand how they conclude from this that Europeans are naturally more endowed with reason than peoples from other parts of the world, without considering all their fellow citizens in their towns or villages who don't attain literacy because they are held in a subordinate position. Perhaps they are right about one thing, and there is no such thing as Reality, and I see things that I believe exist

and others don't.
I take you all in my arms,
Your loving son and brother Dieudonné.

Dear son of ours,

A letter from you is always a big event in the Kaaistraat in Oostende. It's nice to hear how you're doing. We're trying to imagine Mathilde and Yann, of course. Lille isn't very far from Oostende and our Princes aren't currently engaged in any belligerent acts against each other. Perhaps we can manage to see each other. The boat trip to Ghent is easy these days, and I believe you can sail along the Leie and Deûle rivers to Lille. It would, of course, bring us great joy to get to know your family.
Your mother and I found it rather amusing that our son Dieudonné is currently staying at La Flèche and is interested in the lessons of several prominent Jesuits. It's certainly good for your understanding that, after Leiden, Leuven, and Paris, you're also visiting La Flèche. We've always maintained that anyone who strives to be cosmopolitan must be able to listen to diverse viewpoints without preconceived notions and then defend their own, subject to an ethics based on equality when it comes to the human species. I remember that your grandfather Pieter counted both Lutherans and Roman Catholics among his conversation partners, that he exchanged views with Claudius, who later renounced the Church, as well as with unwavering defenders of that same Roman Catholic Church and members of the Society of Jesus. He always wanted both he and his conversation partners to be able to express their disagreements without breaking their connection to philosophy and education. And that's often not easy, because it means being able to distance ourselves from those who adopt an arrogantly dogmatic stance, without condemning them, but also without false, paternalistic tolerance. We know that the Republic of Letters is an interesting

phenomenon in the world of scholarship. Yet, it often bothers us that that Republic has so few non-Europeans. We read about philosophers and natural philosophers, about mathematicians and astronomers who live outside Europe, but we rarely meet our non-European contemporaries in person. Is it a linguistic problem? Or is it a cultural problem, where we still allow our European superiority to shine through, consciously or unconsciously? These are questions that preoccupy us.

But I wanted to share two messages with you that relate to our friends, the Jesuits. The first concerns the unworthy behaviour of many of our pious European traders overseas, who continue to merrily trade people as goods, with the tacit consent of equally pious lords, from the humble baron to the powerful king or emperor. It is, after all, thanks to the Society's missionaries many times that we hear with surprise and indignation about the theft of human beings in areas that, not coincidentally, are called Negroland or Barbary on recent European maps, alongside the older names Guinea and Conga. From everywhere, these missionaries report that people are being stolen, captured, and sold for the purpose of maximising the traders' profits. We are painfully aware today that the Ostend Company, which guarantees us part of our income, very likely includes traders who engage in these reprehensible practices. Your mother and I have often discussed selling our shares in the Ostend Company, but we are having a hard time finding less inhumane alternatives. Where are the returns on invested pounds? In the arms trade? In the weaving and cloth mills, which keep the people's children out of school? In the tea and Chinese lines, which are also used to transport slaves?

An old missionary priest told me that when the Europeans claimed to take possession of the land at the beginning of their occupation of what is now America, they were met not with reluctance, but with

disbelief from the local population. The people there seemed inconceivable that one could own land. According to those who survived the arrogant occupation even today, one can ask Nature or the Great Spirit to use the land. And that is only possible if one treats it respectfully. Can one live without possessions and have time to philosophise and produce scientific work? Or do you need the leisure that the ancient Greeks aspired to, and thus property and slaves to provide for one's needs? According to some missionary accounts in the American South, some peoples there too had established a state in which wealthy kings and nobles forced poor subordinates to do the hard work on the land and in building their cities.

I learned from a reliable source that in the Portuguese and Spanish overseas territories, since the beginning of the occupations, the Jesuits were concerned with at least two matters. On the one hand, they considered it their duty to provide the necessary schooling to orphans of Europeans and sons of the established elite so they could later complete their university studies in Portugal or Spain. On the other hand, they saw it as their duty to establish Reductions or Mission Posts to convert the local population to Christianity, so that, as God-fearing and respectful subjects of the King, they would not suffer the fate of slavery. These missionaries were more interested than the other occupiers in learning the local languages, primarily to be more efficient in their conversion. This sounds commendable, and often seemed to be the case, but in addition to the accounts that testify to human involvement, there are also accounts translated from the local languages already spoken in those areas some three hundred years ago, which would indicate that the Reductions were not particularly charitable and that natives there too, performed slave labour. Nowadays, this is grist to the mill of those who see the Society of Jesus as too powerful and accuse it of wanting to be as powerful as the kings in their kingdoms and therefore subversive.

It is not our intention to cast the first stone, nor our habit of blindly accepting what correspondents and friends tell us without consulting other sources to confirm or refute what we are told. But all things considered, we believe that slaveholding is an extension of ownership. This, in turn, is a consequence of relationships imposed by the owner over the non-owner, ever since ownership arose. And in this area, Europeans seem to be leading the way today, precisely at a time when everyone in a particular country wants to press through their own interpretation of the concept of humanism.
We ourselves, dear son, allow us this pun, only wish to press you to our hearts,
Your loving parents John and Marianne

Dear parents,

I read your last letter with great interest. I believe we must indeed continually strive to maintain a non-aggressive attitude toward our conversation partners and toward cultures that are foreign to us. However, we must not neglect to critically examine what we are told and shown. In La Flèche, I am trying to learn how to distinguish dogmatic thinking from investigative thinking.
But before I continue, I want to say that my heart leaped with joy when I read that you're considering visiting us when we return to Lille. I immediately wrote to Mathilde about it and you can imagine she's thrilled with the idea. Mathilde may already be in Lille by now; I'll wait for her next letter to confirm. My stay ends in three months, so this might be the last letter I write to you from here. You can send your future letters back to Rue des Carmes.
I'm now resuming the thread of our reflections. I've been reviewing Hendrick Hamel's diary, which describes the Kingdom of Korea. It paints a picture of a dynasty that relies on classical Confucianism to expand its power. This doesn't make the living conditions of subjects and slaves much better than those here who are subjects of the

Princes who claim to rule by the grace of God.
Of course, I don't want to turn a single description into universal reality, just as I don't want to make one prince the model for all Christian princes. The Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel can hardly be seen as the moral representative of all Christian dukes, just as you can't say that all cardinals are the spitting image of Cardinal Fleury.
I will recount what I understood from the story about the lords of the Koryŏ lands, which, as far as we know, were still ruled by the Chosŏn dynasty. In this particular version of Confucian society polygamy is common, but coupled with a form of imaginary monogamy. As a result, a status system quickly developed. Only sons born to the first wife could inherit their father's yang-ban status. Consequently, yang-bans did not marry off their daughters as concubines. Concubines, therefore, necessarily come from lower estates. Secondary sons are therefore doubly disadvantaged if they want to obtain yang-ban status. They cannot inherit it from their father, nor can they obtain it through their mother. Only yang-ban women are allowed to advocate for this status for their sons. The strict regulations of and for the elite families are said to have their origins in what Zhu Xi and his disciples wrote about the family. The local Confucian scholar-officials thus, in a sense, base their arguments for a strict hierarchy between wife and concubine, regarding morality and family law, on Confucian values. Concubines have fewer rights, so their descendants also have fewer rights. For example, they are not allowed to participate in examinations to become high-ranking officials. Today, there is talk of changes, but even after Hendrick Hamel's diary, reports from these regions remain very scarce and difficult to verify. Tensions with Japan could play a role in the ongoing changes. The ever-increasing number of secondary sons is said to exert pressure on the elite, just as the ever-growing group of high-blood clergymen in our country does. However, according to those who subtly interpret

the rules there, the Confucian saying about equality is not about heaven-given humanity, but about heaven-given talent. The elite maintains its position. Talent and lineage are two different things. So you would get a government post by passing an exam because of your heaven-given talent, but that does not make you humanly equal to the nobility.

Many high-ranking officials are advocating hŏt'ong *or the right to participate in the state examination, but never for equality. They only say that talented men should be able to participate in the examination. Others refute this. They refer, among others, to the sage Yi Hwang, who two hundred years ago explained why he was against* hŏt'ong. *Because of property rights, he argues, a fundamental distinction must be made between primary and secondary sons, and between the nobility and other classes. This is the only way to firmly uphold the State and the family. The State must not erase this essential distinction. For Yi and those who cite him, the social order based on Confucian property law is more important than acquiring a few gifted men from the secondary son class. The secondary sons themselves don't seem particularly impressed by this talent right, nor, for that matter, by the idea of human equality. They don't want universal equality. They want to be able to be Yang-ban and then apply Confucian authority to themselves.*

The high officials advocating hŏt'ong *are essentially isolated. Even those who, according to them, would benefit from it are not very enthusiastic about it.*

The strict distinction among the classes or myŏngbun, *remains in full force, which also increases the number of available slaves. You could say that the dual matriarchal and patriarchal inheritance not only promotes the laws protecting class but also slavery. Slaveholders do their best to have their slaves marry or associate with commoners,*

thus expanding the slave lineage. The patriarch of a poor farming family marries his daughters off to male slaves to get rid of them and gain new slaves. Poor men have little choice but to marry female slaves and thus produce slaves. Powerful slaveholders sometimes force free women to marry their male slaves. The poor enslave themselves to avoid taxes. It is even said that this is one of the reasons why tax revenues have been declining for a century.
What struck me most is that in this region the Confucians whether they are conservative or reformers consider myŏngbun *a law of nature. There is a strict distinction between high and low, between noble and plebeian. In a certain way it is accepted that everyone is born as a child of heaven and earth. But on earth, being a member of society is different for everyone. Here on Earth, it is said, each person plays the role determined by heaven, according to their position: the lord acts as lord, the slave as slave, the father as father, and the son as son.*
Again, I don't want to claim that this example represents the entire philosophy of a non-Christian society. Rather, I want to demonstrate that your sketch of the relationship between arrogance and ignorance doesn't apply only to situations in Abrahamic societies. Unfortunately.
And with this I close this consideration.
Your loving Dieudonné,

Dear Maria,

Dear sister, I'm writing you this message as a supplement to the letters I'm sending to our parents, which I know you also read. Remember how we talked about misogynists a few years ago and included the Jesuit Order in that group because of their policies regarding theater and female roles? I heard here that in the Provincia Flandro-Bélgica *so, in the Flanders of the Low Countries, local school boards often ignore the ban on featuring female*

characters. It's claimed that there's even a girls' theatre scene here, and that there are known cases of mixed-gender performances. Can you and Begga find out more about this? Note that this isn't a change in response to a new official position, but rather a spontaneous violation of an untenable rule. If, moreover, this violation is condoned, you can add hypocrisy to misogyny.
Something else. I'm not very impressed with the school for the poor in Sablé-sur-Sarthe. It's disappointing, dear sister, how quickly the educational landscape disappears as soon as you start looking for good examples of education for boys who don't belong to the bourgeoisie or the nobility. Not to mention girls, as you well know. I don't give up easily, but it's clear by now that even if we could create good schools for the less fortunate, they will always be rare exceptions.
Our parents are thinking of coming to Lille to meet the rest of the family. I would, of course, be very pleased if you could join them on that trip.
Your affectionate brother Dieudonné.

My dear dear husband,

I'm back at our house in Lille. The journey was a bit difficult, and little Yann often couldn't control his impatience. He's sleeping much less now, and it's harder to keep him calm in a shaking and jolting carriage. But in the end everything went well and it was truly wonderful to rediscover our familiar surroundings. Only <u>you</u> are not here, dear Dieudonné. I think of you constantly and count down the weeks that separate us.
Just before we left Cirey, Émilie had a minor crisis. She's been trying to get Sieur Maupertuis to Cirey since she interrupted her math lessons when she left Paris. The castle is still under reconstruction, and Sieur Maupertuis has also let her know he doesn't have time to meet her nearly 40 miles from Paris. She was angry about this. But

he's preparing a major case that's taking up a lot of his time. That's how I learned that the dispute between Cassini and Newton regarding the shape of the globe has prompted the King to finance two expeditions to settle the matter. A good move. The measurements will increase the prestige of the Académie des Sciences, whatever the conclusion. After all, both expeditions are led by Frenchmen, Sieur La Condamine and Sieur Maupertuis himself, and funded with French money. Not exactly as the Republic of Letters sees it, but you can hardly expect a cosmopolitan attitude from the Court. And these kinds of expeditions simply depend on who is willing to pay for them. Émilie has demanded that Sieur Maupertuis share his findings with her as soon as he can, as they will ultimately provide experimental clarity on one of Isaac Newton's reasoned calculations, which she and Sieur Voltaire often discuss passionately.
Our farewell was very cordial. I plan to continue corresponding with Émilie and Thérèse Geoffrin, and they both encouraged me to do so.
Dear Dieudonné, my heart is itching. I'm barely holding back my impatience until the moment we can speak face to face again.
Your Mathilde.

Dear Mathilde,

This letter precedes me in days. By the time you read it, I probably won't be far away. I'm writing it a week before my departure for Lille. This long year of not seeing each other is over. Dear Mathilde, I hope that if any more trips follow, we'll do them together.
Yesterday, we had a kind of final conversation among fellow students, although we all intend to continue writing to each other. It was mainly about perception, cause and effect, and reality, which also raised the difficult question of whether we live in a deterministic world or whether free will exists. I think this will continue to occupy philosophers and natural philosophers for centuries to come. At one point, we laughed. We got the feeling that we were all apparently

children of Erasmus, but also a little bit of Luther. For the sake of clarity, I should add that in our conversation, we didn't so much put forward the Transcendental as Nature, as defined by Newton in mathematical laws, as a general deterministic element—including the nature of human action.

Amo Afer was mentioned again. Not long ago, he supposedly said that everything knowable is either a thing in itself, a sensation, or a working of the mind. That seemed pretty clear to us. For those of us involved in education and upbringing, his position on learning is also interesting. Of course, we all agree with Newton's words that hypotheses are not simply invented, but based on knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge. But how exactly do you acquire that knowledge? How do you gain certainty about the thing itself? Amo Afer claims Omne cognoscibile aut res ipsa *and, in our opinion, explains it as follows: "True learning is acquiring knowledge through and from things in themselves. The basis of cognition is therefore certainty about the thing itself". We look forward to his next publication, in which he says he will further develop these ideas.*

David spoke about his fellow countryman George Berkeley who, about twenty years ago Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge *argued that one can only partially perceive God's creation through what senses can grasp. Only those things one truly perceive truly exist, while all thoughts, all spiritual things, exist within our own inner being. One of our professors present then reminded us that, according to colleagues in Paris, this pushes Malebranche's dualistic perspective on the relationship between body and mind to absurd extremes. I have some sympathy for that argument but note that there have always been heated debates between Oratorians and Jesuits, not always based on reason. In any case, for the work he is undertaking, David would also consider what Amo Afer calls sensation and what he himself means by the word*

"experience". Ultimately, he believes that is the source of knowledge, which we return to in order to investigate what we do not yet know. This requires perception. And what do we perceive? It is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to find the substance that lies behind the things we have experienced. Can one find one's true self through self-knowledge, or merely some observations and states of consciousness? And can one truly perceive causality, or can one only infer cause from two independent events? The BEING of things with their mutual relationships, and that of the Other, is then nothing else than the HABIT of perceiving those things, those relationships, and that Other again and again. But does that mean that what one considers reality is a provisional reality? This led to a very lively discussion about the meaning of repeating observations and the significance of setting up experiments to allow others, students for example, to experience what we ourselves have experienced. For that is precisely what makes it possible to understand nature and its rules. But David put it this way: ultimately, one can never truly know whether what is the result of a cause today will still be the result tomorrow. With a touch of self-mockery, he continued that as a philosopher in his study, he can have those doubts, but as a person walking down the street, he knows before he is bumped that the pain that follows is a consequence of having bumped into the cause.

Because I am quite familiar with the writings of Zera Yacob and have just read Amo Afer's De humanae mentis apatheia*, I venture to say that Amo bases his thinking more than Yacob on logical deduction with rigorous arguments. In this, he demonstrates his difficulty with Descartes' dualism which advocates the essential difference between body and mind. My more well-travelled study advisor recently remarked that Amo may be drawing on his tribal background and native language when thinking about body and mind.*

If I understand correctly, David wants to pick up that thread again.

He says that the mind is indeed guided by the senses, but nevertheless has its own workings. Although we can't truly perceive cause and effect, we assume it. Therefore, our experience leads us to assume that once we've experienced this connection, we will always experience it again. But isn't that more faith than perception, a kind of instinct born of habit? You can't dismiss that kind of faith. You also can't know whether it gives us knowledge of reality or allows us to create a self-made image of that reality. We see that a bird has wings instead of arms, we see that another bird has wings instead of arms, and we say that all birds have wings but not arms. Is that correct? Every time we put a kettle on the stove, we see that the water in that kettle eventually begins to boil. From this, we infer that the water in the kettle we just put on the stove will soon boil as well. Is that correct?

Most of my more illustrious conversation partners have often studied in various branches of science. I admit that I sometimes struggle when we discuss cause and effect while simultaneously discussing humanity and its spirit and nature in general, especially when there are also historians in the group. Can you speak of rules, that is, of ever-recurring things for everything? Is the mathematical rule that describes the orbits of the planets yesterday and today also valid for the orbits of those planets tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, and a thousand years from now? Can you derive a rule from the history of people and kingdoms in the past that allows us to predict the precise future of people and kingdoms? Or can we only speak of the probability that if something begins this way, it will end that way? To what extent are these considerations useful for our dream of allowing everyone to participate in the acquisition of knowledge? Even with all its meticulously laid down rules, the Little School of Christian Brothers has different consequences for different children. After completing her journey, not everyone is equally literate; some

remain illiterate, while others quickly succeed in surpassing their master. Is the learning process of the boy in the little school, like that of the natural philosopher Amo discusses, related to certainty about the thing itself? How does the acquisition of habits work in the little school, and how does this acquisition determine the learning itself of what is already known? What is the role of experimentation and of revisiting or perceiving what others have already experienced or perceived?
Mathilde I'm coming home with a lot of questions. With the knowledge and experience you gained during your stay in Cirey, I think we won't be bored for the next few years. We can further develop our ideas and start planning our next dinner activities.
One last bit of news. This morning, I heard from two of the professors here they're giving me a letter of introduction and recommendation for a teaching position at the Jesuit College in Lille.
I embrace you tenderly,
Your Dieudonné.

Lille Dinners

Dieudonné and Mathilde are happy now they're back together. The quietest period of their lives is now dawning. From Lille, they follow the happenings of French high society through their busy correspondence and frequent visits. They also stay informed about the goings-on in the Republic of Letters. Dieudonné's renewed acquaintance with the Larouge-au-Château family is less difficult than it had been in Paris. The enthusiasm with which Dieudonné and Mathilde discuss their plans to establish a larger local evening salon has an unexpected consequence. Mathilde's father agrees to finance the purchase of

the adjacent property allowing them to significantly enlarge the residence. After the renovations, during which they move in with the Lacour family for a few months, they have a large ground-floor room at their disposal, easily accommodating twenty to thirty people.

Shortly before they begin renovations, they receive a visit from Dieudonné's parents without Maria. She is busy with Begga de Bruges and doesn't want to interrupt her research. John and Marianne opted for the boat trip, which went very smoothly. In just over two days, they arrive in Lille after an overnight stay with friends in Ghent. They plan to stay there for a few days upon their return.

Mathilde immediately gets along very well with her in-laws. Many of their conversations are about the new supplements for the *Opus Omnia* which is now in its third edition. Dieudonné recounts how his fellow students at La Flèche initially received the work with some reservations. Today, he understands that the way he introduced the work in Paris at the time must have caused resentment. By immediately linking the topic of education and teaching methods to the characterisation of individuals based on arrogance and ignorance, he unintentionally gave many of his conversation partners the impression that he was personally criticising them. At La Flèche, he learned to introduce the two topics differently.

John then says: "I'm completely convinced that there's a connection between how a teacher or mentor wishes to support young people's learning process and how that same teacher or mentor looks at himselve. But it takes a good dose of diplomacy

to make this a topic of discussion among teachers."
Mathilde bursts out laughing: "I'm not that good a diplomat. And Dieudonné isn't exactly known for his diplomacy when he defends his positions on child rearing."
Dieudonné then says: "At the moment, I am mainly concerned with the second of the three schemes. I felt that there was interest in the schemes in La Flèche (*ed.: see earlier, the birth of ignarometry)* What strikes me everywhere, including at La Flèche, is that those who primarily instruct often consider themselves to work primarily through dialogue. Even more dogmatic instructors, who constantly point out to students how they deviate from what they call the Truth, claim to use only targeted questioning.
"That's a good example of how mental narrowing works," John notes. "I think it's a consequence of the scholasticism developed in Latin schools and universities, which also remains very popular in many colleges. Less knowledgeable instructors confuse sophistic dialectics with Socratic dialogue. The two forms of work are only similar in appearance. The instructors involved say they don't orate but use questioning to engage the student. The major difference is that the sophists convince the student of the teacher's point of view. In doing so, they use questioning as manipulation. In contrast, Socratic dialogue in its primitive form aims to avoid manipulation and primarily support the student in their argumentation. In this way, the student learns how to organize their search for new knowledge and how to contribute to new knowledge."
Marianne then says: "I believe dogmatists always have the

underlying intention of convincing others of their point of view. They do this by using rhetoric or sophistical scholasticism. We often have to accuse university professors who claim to use Socratic dialogue when essentially they impose an accepted truth without questioning it."

"That makes it very difficult to distinguish dialogic learning from instructional learning," Dieudonné notes. "When the Little School takes over as how teaching methods are used in *artes liberales*, then in the first case, as in the second, there is rarely any dialogue. Moreover, teachers who treat the students of the Little School as a blank slate when introducing each new concept can easily think that dialogical learning is therefore impossible.

Now Mathilde notes: "Therein lies a major difficulty. It's very difficult to get Little School teachers to accept that children are thinking beings and that learning through dialogue is possible. That requires a thorough and challenging education that challenges prejudices and customs. How often are children simply told how the world works, and how often have we seen, time and again, that what was once said is now, in many cases, simply nonsense or a form of superstition?"

"Right," says Mariana, "who was it that said magical intervention disappears once the phenomenon is understood? That's been increasingly true over the last two hundred years. But if we listen to those who read ancient manuscripts and documents from the early days of printed books, we quickly understand the age-old human problem. We're so impatient to find an explanation for everything we observe and experience that it doesn't bother us at all to assume at best a divine explanation and at worst to invent

any magical power for it."
Dieudonné echoes Marianne's words, looks at his parents, and says, "I think of the writings of great-grandfather Wolfgang, grandfather Pieter, and your work. You take the perspective of the student, not the teacher, when considering learning. It's not just important that the teacher is a good student. They must be skilled in maintaining constructive dialogue for the student. That's a very important aspect."
Dieudonné then elaborates briefly on the card games he once created. With these cards, he wanted not only to incorporate a game element, but also to offer each disciple, based on written questions, learning material that would allow each individual to build on experience and observation.

From wide *the soupers* at the Lemaître-Larouge house which move forward to *dîners* and are greatly appreciated. Since the renovations Dieudonné and Mathilde have made it a habit to invite ten to twenty guests for dinner followed by conversation three times a week. They ask guests to bring only interesting news for the *dinner* and the ensuing conversation. During the *dinner* the conversation itself usually has a lighter character.
On such an evening, news from Paris comes up that the Duchess of Maine, founder of the Order of the Honey fly decided to rent the Hôtel Peyrenc de Moras from the widow of the unscrupulous financier. What will the festivities be like now that Luise-Bénédicte de Bourbon has the estate's large garden at her disposal? The guests speculate about how the aristocratic guests will react, who, thanks to Peyrenc's intervention, were able to conceal their financial debacle but sold their properties to him at

significantly below their value. This, in turn, funded the construction of this hôtel with its castle-like allure. It is generally assumed that vanity will speak louder than self-worth, and that these aristocrats will have no intention of missing a sophisticated event organised by Madame de Maine.

That same evening, the conversation took on a more scientific character. One of the guests was a physician. Like many of his colleagues, he was a physician and natural scientist, with a particular interest in what was called alchemy just a hundred years ago, but is now known as iatrochemistry or chemiatry thanks to the work of researchers like Jean Baptiste Van Helmont. Dieudonné and Mathilde's guest spoke about the research of the recently deceased Georg Stahl, who was court physician to the Prussian king for a long time. He described himself as a physician and chemiatrician. In his view, iatrochemistry was useless in supporting medical theories, but only for making medicines. He also disagreed with those natural scientists who tried to explain life with mechanical models. Moreover, he maintained that illness was primarily the result of aging and a person's mental state. Therefore, he said, one must be very careful about using chemical agents and other intrusive agents on a sick person. According to Stahl, chemiatry had nothing to do with life itself. As a chemiatrician, he primarily studied the composition of substances. For example, he suspected the existence of underlying differences between the caustic substances that cause skin wounds. Now, *Sieur* Henri Louis Duhamel du Monceau has been able to prove this. He recently demonstrated that salt rocks of potash and those of

soda produce solutions with similar effects on the body, but which differ from each other.
This kind of information, during the conversations that follow the dinners, often leads to discussions about how to encourage young people to experiment safely in order to absorb the ever-growing amount of knowledge.

Shortly after Dieudonné's parents return to Ostend, the interference of the ruling nobility in the economy is discussed. That evening, Dieudonné speaks to his guests alone*(1)*. And someone asks him if his parents were financially interested in the Ostend Company. When Dieudonné replies that they still are, his dinner companions are surprised. As far as they know, the end of the Company was part of the Treaty of Vienna in 1731, with which the Emperor wanted to ensure his daughter's succession to the throne. Dieudonné says that while this may be true on paper, ships still sail from Ostend, effectively continuing the Company's activities.
"I just heard from my father, by the way, that the repayment of the capital has now been completed with a net profit of more than one and a half times the initial capital. I suspect, by the way, that the Treaty of Vienna will have as little influence on securing the accession to the throne as it did on the settlement of the Ostend Company, mark my words," Dieudonné concludes.

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[1] This conversation likely dates back to 1737, as far as can be deduced from documents about the Company recovered during recent excavations. This may also be the birth year of one of Yann's brothers, who is later mentioned in a letter from Yann to a second brother, Karel, who, years later, after Dieudonné's death, would accompany his mother to Ostend – see volume 4 – The Privilege of Knowing.

Another evening, the conversation turns to Johann Sebastian Bach. The renowned composer has since moved from Köthen to Leipzig. The harpsichord concertos are discussed. The piano forte is slowly becoming more popular, and some wonder how these concertos will sound on this new keyboard instrument. According to music experts, Bach decided to give up his quiet life in Köthen to participate in the more culturally rich life of Leipzig. Here, he can produce more impressive works and also give his sons the opportunity to study at a good university. Others believe his move was primarily due to the musical tastes of Prince Leopold's wife.
Then one of the attendees asks if anyone knows anything about the young Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The questioner knows he's supposedly working on a new musical notation. Little is known about him. Dieudonné promises to try to find out more about the man.

Mathilde receives a letter from Émilie de Châtelet in which she discusses her troubles with her chambermaid. She thought she was dealing with a well-bred young woman. After all, it is the sister of Monsieur Linant, whom she had considered sufficiently qualified to be her son's tutor. But now his sister has spoken about her in a rude and insulting tone. She writes that she had no choice but to throw them both out. So she is looking for a new tutor for her son. She wants to ensure his son receives the best possible education, she decides. Mathilde jokes with Dieudonné that he could offer himself as a tutor in Cirey. That might have been nice a few years ago, but now they have a much more pleasant life in Lille than they would have in the

almost constant company of Voltaire, even if the conversations with Émilie are very stimulating.
During the same period, Dieudonné receives a message from David Hume who has returned to Paris that his *Treatise on Human Nature* is ready for a first proof. Hume will soon return to Scotland. Dieudonné hopes to obtain a copy of David's work as soon as it is printed.

The 30s are now drawing to a close. Dieudonné and Mathilde follow the events in Cirey, which often serve as inspiration for the much more sober evening conversations in Lille.
It is quite clear that Émilie's acquaintance, as well as her long-standing relationship with Voltaire, causes some envy here and there. During a dinner, a friend of Mathilde's mentions Parisian gossip directed at Madame de Châtelet, affectionately called by her friend and lover *Madame Pompon Newton*. Madame de Graffigny mocked it a bit, saying that Émilie was indeed adorning herself with too much ornamentation. Madame Duffand was more venomous. She told anyone who would listen that the Marquise de Châtelet recently displayed her jewellery shop for her: '*She has fifteen or twenty snuffboxes of gold and precious stones, and of admirable lacquer. There are some with that new, exorbitantly expensive fashion of enamelled gold. I saw just as many similar pieces of jewellery, each more beautiful than the last. She showed me enormous display cases filled with boxes and cases of jaspers and diamonds. She has a large collection of rings, with not very beautiful diamonds and many rare stones. There is also an endless collection of trinkets of all kinds. There are earrings, pompoms, and precious stones in abundance*'.

Mathilde, who admires Émilie's great talent, suggests that these may be signs of jealousy. The commentary comes from women recognised as well-known salonnières but perhaps less interested in scholarship and more devoted to literary and musical pursuits. She cites a letter from a friend. This friend wrote to her in December 1738 that Madame du Châtelet was currently entertaining her guests at her castle in Cirey with an improvised translation from Latin of a remarkable book by Wolff.

"That philosopher is of German and not English origin as my friend claims," says Mathilde, "but anyway, he writes: '*This morning our hostess read us the geometric calculations of an English dreamer who wants to prove that the inhabitants of Jupiter are the same size as King Og, as mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. I don't know if you can laugh at that. We were quite amused by the madness of someone who spends so much time and effort learning something so useless. But I admired something quite different: I saw Émilie reading a book written in Latin in French. She hesitated before each sentence. I think that was because of the inserted calculations; after all, she translated metaphysical terms, numbers, and extravagance in the same breath. Nothing stops her. It's quite remarkable*.' I think my friend describes her quite well. She really has a remarkable mind and a great talent for quickly grasping complex concepts."

Jean-Jacques Rousseau is also briefly mentioned again. Someone heard that he moved to Lyon to work as a preceptor for a local judge. It's now said that, at the age of twenty-seven, he became interested in raising children.

During that period a new habit starts after the *dinners* at the Lemaître-Larouge home. After the meal, those present can choose between coffee or chocolate mixed with cane sugar. For some time now, chocolate has ceased to be considered merely a medicine bought at the pharmacy. Along with coffee, it has become a fashionable drink. Only years later would Dieudonné and Mathilde stop serving coffee and chocolate when they came to the shocking conclusion that these beverages, intended for enjoyment, originated on plantations where Black slaves, often deported from their villages, laboured to death under constant threat.

De Châtelet-decade

The 40s have arrived. It has been almost sixty years since Isaac Newton proposed *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* to the Royal Society. Despite all the criticism he faced at the time, scientists in Europe were increasingly convinced that with this work he provided natural philosophers with a powerful mathematical tool and put into practice a number of very plausible hypotheses. Although many voices were already calling for scientific work to be published in the native language, Newton wrote his *Opus* in Latin. This way, it remained understandable to all natural philosophers, wherever Latin was taught. Mathilde knows that Madame du Châtelet continues to study mathematics. But she is now also learning English to better understand Newton's linguistic environment. This is no coincidence. Who write in Latin today is always influenced by their native language. But like Voltaire and Maupertuis, she is

convinced that Newton's new vision of the universe must be offered even to those who do not speak Latin. They support her in her endeavor to translate *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* into French And that's why she wants to understand Newton's Latin better.

Émilie receives even more support for her efforts after she herself published *Institutions de Physique*. Dieudonné and Mathilde knew that with this book, she wanted to give their thirteen-year-old son an overview of the new ideas in natural philosophy. The book provided a good opportunity to discuss these new ideas with their guests. Meanwhile, Dieudonné started teaching at the Jesuit College and managed to attract a skilled mathematician to the dinner. He helped the group understand how Émilie connected Leibniz's theory with the observations of Willem Jacob 's Gravesande and ultimately improved Newton's idea. The Leiden professor was known for his experiment with brass balls, which he dropped from different heights and thus at different speeds onto a soft clay surface. He shared his observations with Émilie. 's Gravesande thus demonstrated that the depth of the clay impression is determined not only by the mass of the ball, but also by its speed. He discussed with Émilie that this disagrees with Newton and Descartes' claims but does confirm the hypotheses of Huygens and Leibniz. Émilie then proposes a new formula that gives priority to velocity over mass. With her notation $\mathbf{E} \propto \boldsymbol{mv^2}$ she mathematically indicates that the proposed *vis viva* by Leibniz describes the nature of the falling object better than the *vis insita* van Newton.

Dieudonné once attended lectures by Willem Jacob 's Gravesande in Leiden and speaks of his teaching skills. He recalls the professor's habit of illustrating his lessons. He designed applied experiments for this purpose. He invented, among other things, the collision apparatus and the heliostat. He relied on the instrument makers Jan and Pieter van Musschenbroek for their construction. This sparked a lively discussion among the lecturers present about how these kinds of experiments in the College would not only serve as visual aids but also serve to lead the students to empirical conclusions.

When the discussion among the teachers escalates, Mathilde points out that Émilie didn't just dedicate her work to her son, but actually wrote it for him as the preface reveals. Yet, Mathilde says, it's not just a matter of a mother writing for her son. In a sense, she represents all mothers writing for all sons and daughters. How can the world evolve if learned men philosophise only among themselves, excluding women from some of their circles and their cafés? And what will the world look like if learned and wealthy gentlemen are concerned with the education of their wealthy sons, but still not with the education and schooling of all their children?

Mathilde recalls that Ian Amos Comenius had that dream in a sense a hundred years ago. She herself feels that a true Little School and College for everyone has yet to begin. She illustrates how Émilie attempts to guide young students in their mathematical thinking with this book. She first uses less abstract geometric concepts to gradually introduce more rational algebra. Mathilde further emphasises how Émilie advocates that

early childhood education should treat scientific and literary culture equally. But, Mathilde adds, while she admires Émilie and considers herself fortunate to correspond with her, it is also true that Émilie usually not addresses to ***all*** children when she talks about mathematics education. And she and Dieudonné want to increasingly emphasise this. In this way, they believe they can contribute to building a community of less ignorant and less arrogant people, which in turn will result in fewer victims of that arrogance and ignorance.
Dieudonné reminds that ignorance is not peculiar to poor people who are denied a good little school or replaced by an inferior place of instruction. He cites the concern of the Republic of Letters community regarding Oxford University as an example. According to this group, the use of the *Bodleian* library was downright deplorable. It was already known from Thomas Hearne that little was invested in the library when he was still working as the second librarian and was involved in cataloging. According to him, in 1692 and 1693, only one book was purchased per year. After he was banished from the library for political reasons in 1716, the situation did not improve. In 1730, purchases for the *Bodleian* did not go beyond seven pounds sterling. What is truly alarming is that fewer books were requested per year in the early 40s than were requested per month in 1700.

With an '*I'll be back in the early afternoon*' Dieudonné says goodbye to Mathilde and the children and goes out. It is foggy and cold. There is snow in the air. He wants to walk briskly and that is easier if he avoids *Castle Square* and the streets towards

Saint Etienne, because that area is particularly busy at this hour with churchgoers and market visitors. He therefore decides to cross *New Bridge* towards the *Rue Française* up to the *Rue Royal* to walk down and then through the *Rue de la Barre* reach the *Rue des Jésuites*. He's almost at the *Rue de la Barre* when he sees a column of smoke through the thin fog. He suspects a fire has broken out somewhere. The smell of smoke and burnt wood is stronger than usual. He approaches the *Place de l'Arsenal* and sees the red glow of flaming flames. He doesn't get to the square. Two agitated teachers from the *College* run towards him and shout " Back, back". A large fire is raging in the chapel and has spread to the school. Dieudonné stays with his colleagues while they help students together. People are out in the street for clearing the *College* and want to prevent the flames reaching the other side. A while later the school dean comes to the teachers on the *Place de l'Arsena*l to inform them that for the time being only an attempt is made to extinguish the fire and that they should return home. Dieudonné invites two teachers who live outside the city to have a hot meal at his home and together they walk back to the *Rue des Carmes*. Mathilde looks up in surprise and immediately understands that something is wrong. They sit down in front of the open fire in the large downstairs room, and Dieudonné and Mathilde ask for hot drinks. Shortly after noon, the dean, a faithful guest at the dinners, arrives. He tells them that about half of the school has been destroyed by fire. Classes may be able to resume in the remaining half, but it will be difficult to find accommodations for boarding students. It will take some time before the school is fully operational again.

Dieudonné says he can host students at his home for lessons and that some boarders can also find temporary shelter there.
The College chapel is a more difficult case. It may have to be completely rebuilt, and it will take several years before that is possible.

At the end of the same day, one hears at the city gates of the roads leading to *Belgium Austriacum* that Empress Maria Theresa is in a bad way. Frederick II of Prussia challenges her authority. A few weeks later, it is learned that Frederick had already invaded Silesia in December 1740 without a declaration of war.
Dieudonné is worried. It seems the French king will sooner or later decide to attack the Austrian Netherlands. It has long been known that he is ignoring the Pragmatic Sanction and tries to expand his territory. Mathilde and Dieudonné fear above all for their family in Oostende. The ports of Dunquerque, Nieuwpoort, and Oostende have always been targets in conflicts between the warring royal houses in the Low Countries. Nevertheless, a reassuring letter arrives from John. For the moment, there are no troop movements in or around Oostende. On the other hand, the Republic of the Seven United Provinces is strengthening the garrisons of Namur, Tournai, Menen, Furnes, Warneton, and Ypres. The Republic's main purpose is to remind them that the Barrier Treaty of 1715 is still in force and that the Stadtholder is siding with the House of Habsburg. John writes that one can only hope that Oostende remains unaffected.

After the fire at the Jesuits', and with no certainty about the chapel's reconstruction and the school building's restoration,

Dieudonné devotes more of his time to the soirée activities, together with Mathilde. During this time, their third son, Karel, is born.
Dieudonné and Mathilde correspond with researchers and philosophers who are part of the Republic of Letters and maintain contact with Jansenists and with whom are named the *Strong Spirits*. Enlightened by reason and philosophy, they explore the Christian faith and even question it. The group exchanges arguments and continually makes commentaries without publishing them in book form. Copyists do manage to quickly reproduce handwritten or quickly printed leaflets and pamphlets with deistic, atheistic, heterodox, and critical theses. A network of book distributors discreetly distributes the texts privately and offers or sells them in cafés or in the backyard of a bookstore. Through this network, Dieudonné and Mathilde gain information about the ideas circulating in Protestant areas in Europe and beyond, but also in areas where ethics and morality are guided by non-Christian lifestyles.

Along the same lines, Mathilde became acquainted with a manuscript containing a critical examination of the Bible by Émilie du Châtelet. She examined texts from the Old and New Testaments according to scholarly standards. Émilie's research highlights the incoherence and improbability of many stories in the book, which believers claim were inspired by God. *Sieur* Voltaire said of this study that it was conducted in Cirey, drawing on the erudition of the family friend, Benedictine Dom Calmet.
Mathilde uses the reading of the manuscript as an opportunity to write to Émilie, Maria Lesmeister and Begga de Bruges about

the problem of truth versus lie: *'Can a lie be justified? Can texts that support a dogma be subjected to the same scientific scrutiny as a natural-philosophical problem? When can a text be seen as a metaphor, and when does it become a lie? Is a metaphor a necessary lie?*' Mathilde here recalls the heated discussions in the Procope and the *Désintéressée des Journaux Littéraires* of Bruys and asks: *'Can we distinguish truth from falsehood by following our senses?'*

In one of her answers, Begga de Bruges writes: *'I believe that our senses not only sometimes have difficulty grasping the truth, but that they sometimes deliberately obscure it. I'm thinking here of one of Christopher Wren's magnificent buildings. As you know, St. Paul's Cathedral was rebuilt after the Great Fire of London based on his drawings. If you examine the large model and are allowed to visit the interior galleries of the dome, you immediately see how your senses give you a carefully constructed false impression. The inner dome is not a dome at all, but a trompe-l'oeil. Wren, the builder, knew very well that the weight of the dome's superstructure could not be distributed to the supporting columns by a spherical object and that a conical construction was necessary. Moreover, the supporting columns were made higher than what was intended to be shown. The ceiling painting and the decoration of the superstructure of the columns give us the intended effect: the idea of an elegant and airy dome that enhances our connection with heaven. I might call this a mathematical and architectural lie..'*

Following Begga's remark, Mathilde and Dieudonné spent the following months carefully examining each wall and ceiling painting. How many desperate lies do artists rely on to make

our eyes see something that isn't there? They talked with painter friends about depth and perspective and the different ways in which you can make the eye see what isn't. For Dieudonné, the conversation provided an opportunity to place the discussion of experience and inner faith in a simple framework. What is ultimately the difference between believing you see depth on a surface or seeing transcendence in a natural phenomenon? This, in turn, provided an opportunity to discuss the experience and inner faith of teachers and preceptors during the dinner evenings, in relation to dialogue, dialectics, scholasticism, and didactics.

Meanwhile, many are under the illusion that there is no war going on. Most of the family's friends and acquaintances are also working, writing, and even corresponding with each other across the French border. Naturally, many gradually they see and feel that taxes are rising to provide for the troops. Until now, however, the residents of Lille had not directly experienced the conflict caused by those questioning the imperial status of the Austrian Habsburg Maria Theresa. That suddenly changes in the summer of 1745. It then becomes clear that Oostende and Nieuwpoort shall be attacked and occupied to prevent reinforcements from Great Britain reaching the Habsburg allies via those ports. All communication with Menen, Ypres, Ghent, and Bruges are now, if not impossible, at least very difficult. News from Oostende also stops altogether. These are anxious hours for Dieudonné. Until late autumn of that year, he hears nothing from the family at all.

The inhabitants of Oostende now also know that the occupation

and capture of the city by French troops is inevitable. After all, the port is of too much strategic importance. The city council prepares to carry out the capture without violence. But then things go wrong for the Ostend residents. On July 11, 1745, French troops capture Ghent, according to some as a result of a ruse, according to others through treachery. More than three hundred Hanoverian hussars flee towards Sluis. The inhabitants of Sluis, who fear for their city and their lives if they engage the hussars, do not let them in. The corps then flees through the dunes to Oostende. Then, the British regiment led by Campbell withdraws to Oostende after French soldiers capture Bruges on July 16. Hussars and British soldiers believe they can defend Oostende. They requisition houses for the troops. Mariana and John fear for their house and especially for their library. Fortunately, it is now summer, so there is little danger that wooden paneling and books will serve as fuel. However, the house was deemed unsuitable because it was too close to the city limits and the *Quay Gate*, potentially subjecting it to cannon fire. However, the army leadership request them to leave the city. John is 67 and too old to be drafted into the city's defense. Furthermore, all women and children are ordered out of the city. In mid-July, they depart with heavy hearts for Sluis aboard a fishing vessel belonging to one of John's acquaintances. Many Ostend shipowners have good friends there who, averse to religious strife, were, like the Ostend dwellers, more concerned with their city and their region than with the possessiveness of ruling royal houses. John and Mathilde are given shelter by the family of a well-read schoolmaster. He is delighted to have the couple, whose work he had read, staying

with him. He proudly showed them the copies of Comenius' *Janua Linguarum* and *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* and also the paintings and drawings he uses to make his lessons more vivid for the children in his care.

On August 25, John and Mariana learn that a French regiment had captured the city two days earlier and that the capitulation is a fact. When, in early September, the Ostend residents staying in Sluis learn that the French king had attended *God bless you* in the main church of Oostende it seems safe for them to return home.

Dear boy,

You must have been worried when you learned that the French King had recaptured Ghent. We both knew it would lead to the siege and occupation of Oostende. All things considered, it wasn't too bad for our family, but war violence is always a tragedy for everyone and a sad event for those who don't share the high lords' fantasy that weapons can bring people closer together. Some three hundred garrison soldiers died here. On the French side, the toll was heavier. There's talk of fifteen hundred dead. How many mothers, wives, and sisters will have to weep again over the deaths of their sons and daughters simply because kings break their promises and flout treaties, as they did again after the accession of Maria Theresa? And yet they had accepted the Pragmatic Sanction. Some citizens also died. Whether this was due to stupidity or a communication breakdown by the garrison command, no one can figure out.

What happened? Our house wasn't requisitioned. The garrison leadership was convinced it would be in the line of fire. However, your mother and I were asked to leave the city. Your sister was already gone. Don't worry about her. She found safe haven in the

Beguinage in Bruges, with Begga. Your brother is also doing well. We received word last week that he could escape to Leiden in time.
From those who remained in the city, I received the following account. The paving stones had been removed to build ramparts, and a ton of water and a ton of sand were placed in front of each house as a precaution against bomb fragments and fire. Meanwhile, the besiegers, led by Count de La Mark and Count Marshal Ulrich of Löwendal, took up positions. Count de La Mark positioned himself eastward near the harbour, while on the west side the Marshal set up his cannons after first capturing Mariakerke and Fort Albert. The mixed army remaining in the city tried various methods to stop the French, who were digging their way toward the city walls. Both the firing and the attempts to flood the trenches failed. By August 20, it was already clear that the French had far more men at their disposal and that no new troops would arrive from the sea to aid the besieged. After all, the harbour channel was already under Count de La Mark's control. The French bombarded two large breaches in the walls and took the city from the west. Count Chanclos de Rets de Brisuila had the white flag raised to notify the French of his surrender. But on the east side of the city, no flag was raised. Count de La Mark, upon seeing and hearing the ceasefire on the west side, reportedly ordered them to fire blank shells. But apparently, his gunners didn't follow that order. That's supposedly why bombs still fell among our fellow citizens celebrating the ceasefire while Löwendal and Chanclos were discussing the terms of surrender. You can't believe it, my boy, people are talking about this gross negligence as a lack of respect for de La Mark, when in fact, it's the fault of those aristocratic gentlemen that a number of unarmed and innocent men of the city lost their lives.
Ironically, our house didn't sustain a scratch. Since the fighting

took place more on the west side than the east, our neighbourhood was largely spared. So we were able to simply move back into our apartments. While most of the silverware is gone, and the rest of the furniture has been significantly reduced, your mother and I are very happy that our library remained intact.

The poorhouse was practically bombed to pieces. Perhaps that was a blessing for the boys and girls who stayed there, I don't know. You may recall that the poorhouse was actually an orphanage with a very dubious reputation for its living and educational conditions. We often hear reports of children running away to escape the disciplinary regime and beatings. With the impending capture of the city, the evacuation of the children was albeit somewhat delayed. The agreement was to transfer them to Oudenburg. When the war actually began and the children were still staying in the buildings directly across from Korte Peperstraat, Dismeester Degmont himself took them to Zandvoorde and from there by boat to Scheepsdale near Bruges. On August 12th, they were given shelter at the Aerme Maegdekens Stede School and the Bogaerde School in exchange for the promise of payment of their expenses. After the capitulation, they immediately returned to Oostende, despite the building being completely destroyed. It will be some time before school reopens. We learned that the meeting room is the temporary workspace. Shortly afterward, we also learned that children are fleeing the poor school again.

We ourselves stayed for a month in Sluis with a very interesting couple. He's a schoolmaster, and we were able to admire his methods. What a contrast to the school for the poor I just mentioned. Perhaps there is hope for the little school outside the big cities after all. Meanwhile, we heard that the King ordered the restoration of all damaged buildings. Apparently, there's funding for that. Will we ever know where that money came from? Either

way, you can't resurrect innocent and unarmed people that way.
I hug you tightly my son, as well as your mother.

Dear parents,

We're very happy that you survived that frightening moment in the protracted series of battles and sieges. Lille and Oostende are now under the control of the same court. Will that make it easier to reach Oostende by riverboat now?
Yet we believe we have the right to wonder how long the aristocracy will continue to engage in war games in its never-ending, pathological urge to occupy regions and levy taxes. The least we can say about the current conflict is that it once again demonstrates how these male-dominated circles consistently relegate women to a secondary role. If my memory serves me correctly, this conflict has been dragging on for almost five years now, due to the fact that just about everyone wants to sideline Maria Theresa and divide the regions controlled by the Habsburgs. Yet, as they say in these salons, the French king is not on a war of conquest. One might wonder why that deadly battle at Fontenoy was necessary, and why two thousand people had to lose their lives near Oostende. We can't make heads or tails of it. Some here praise Louis, who commands his troops so well and is solely focused on bringing peace. Did that have to be done with weapons? I heard that the following article was included in the treaty of capitulation of Oostende, or rather, of the alliance stationed there: "The inhabitants, merchants, and bourgeois of Oostende, journey as at the gate of their privileges. This article depends on the king, but the inhabitants must all hope for the privileges granted by His Majesty." Why was the entire siege necessary? Does that mean that the Ostend ships will continue sailing to the Indies, or will they remain officially prohibited from sailing? And must one first partially destroy a city to then receive praise for its reconstruction?

I say praise because apparently that's the fashion these days. Just listen to Sieur Voltaire. He has recently been appointed historian of the King. He sings the praises of the King who commands his own troops. The nation has an Enlightened King, who is in command himself, he says: 'Maître de son esprit, il l'est de la fortune'. *Enlightened? I don't know if the Jansenists entirely agree with this. The members of the Paris parliament who are banished as soon as they ask too many questions or express criticism will probably have their doubts too. Perhaps our friend Barbier will tell us something about it.*

Admittedly, Sieur Voltaire also draws attention to the horrors of war. He is astonished to see how many young men die. He focuses primarily on the many young officers from the aristocratic circles he knows so well.

In the Paris salons, these aspects of the war aren't discussed much. You can imagine that no one really knows who the soldiers are lead by the salon-goers' sons and often send to their deaths. They prefer to discuss local news.

A friend of Mathilde's brought back the gossip that Jean-Jacques Rousseau is tired of life in Lyon. He's trying to gain attention in the capital for the new musical notation he invented. He doesn't have many followers. A more spicy gossip, however, is that at the Hotel Saint Quentin on Rue des Cordiers near the Sorbonne, he met a young woman who can neither read nor write. He wants to teach her both arts. Rumour has it they live together.

I'd love to hear more about your forced visit to Sluis and your conversations with the schoolmaster you were visiting.

Your Dieudonné.

The ongoing European conflict has financial consequences for almost everyone. Prince Charles Emmanuel III of Sardinia is

facing a severe crisis due to rising grain prices. Money is short to purchase the grain. The issue of paper money is being considered again. Those who oppose recall what happened in France twenty-five years ago. Therefore, the paper money remains guaranteed by the Ducal Treasury. Six million lire worth of paper money is issued, redeemable after five years with an interest rate of 4%. Anyone offered the money must accept it as payment, and for the time being, this solution seems to be accepted.

Mathilde receives a message from Émilie du Châtelet that makes her very happy. Émilie was granted full membership in the Academy of Sciences of the Bologna Institute on April 1, 1746. Émilie herself was also delighted with this appointment. Dieudonné noted that this should give the men of the other academies pause for thought. Many spoke highly of the Enlightenment but continue to dismiss the work of women. The French Academy, in particular, should be ashamed. But he feared that many French scientists were still behaving as misogynists.

Naturally, the election was a hot topic of conversation during one of the evenings at the Lemaître-Larouge residence. Many guests knew that Émilie greatly admired Laura Bassi. Not only was she a member of the Academy of Sciences, she also held her own chair at the University of Bologna. The University was thus putting into practice what remains taboo in France: bringing scientifically-minded women out of the semi-clandestine atmosphere of the salons and giving them their rightful place.

Mathilde in Lille and Marianne in Oostende picks up *La cité des*

Dames. Christine de Pizan suggests that the presence of women in science is a constant phenomenon that is all too often glossed over by male scientists. John recalls the women from Anna Maria van Schurman's circle.

In Lille, no one knows what Émilie's mathematics mentors think about her joining the Bologna Academy of Sciences. They do hear about Maupertuis' appointment as president of the Prussian Academy, through Voltaire's intervention. There's some gloating about his plea for the preservation of a universal language for science that should be able to transcend the local tongue. Only in this way can the academy's international cooperation be guaranteed. And the primary task of all academies is to keep all its members worldwide informed of each other's scientific work. Therefore, says Maupertuis, communication must be in the most universal language. So far so good. But then Maupertuis says that this new universal language is, of course, French. A keen observer, says one of Dieudonné's guests, understands that the French scientist pays too little attention to what's happening in, say, Italy or Sweden. Dieudonné finds all this rather pretentious. Mathilde, on the other hand, finds it amusing. The fact that the French themselves consider their language a universal language is largely a result of the court's religious intolerance. Fearing the threat of death, many Huguenots sought refuge elsewhere. These were often scholars who settled in many places in Western and Central Europe. But Huguenots remain French, and most understand only their native language besides Latin.

Praise for Émilie's work is pouring in from Berlin. She is one of

the ten most renowned scientists worldwide. She continues to critically examine the Bible, and like Voltaire and La Mettrie, she aims to describe the art of living based on reason and experience. In doing so, she tries to avoid preconceived notions and routine thinking. This provides food for thought. Mathilde and her guests are interested in Émilie's ideas about the femininity of her work. Unlike her male colleagues, she considers women in the sciences.

Other *dinner*-conversations are about Maupertuis and his approach to the *panpsychism*. He still resides in Berlin. Most of those present believe Diderot is missing the point by pigeonholing Maupertuis and labeling him a Spinozist. Mathilde and Dieudonné believe the natural philosopher proposes an ethical-philosophical perspective and attempts an unbiased synthesis. He does this by connecting the valuable ideas of various scholars. He therefore doesn't confine himself to a single framework. This is not only a difficult but also a dangerous undertaking. Not all academics grasp the spirit of the Republic of Letters…

In February 1748, Mathilde learned that Émilie was staying in Lunéville at the court of the former King of Poland, Stanisław Leszczyński. Shortly thereafter, people in Lille learned that the poet and soldier Jean-François de Saint-Lambert is her new lover. Émilie writes: *'The more our happiness depends on ourselves, the more certain it is; and yet the passion that can give us more pleasure and make us happiest makes our happiness entirely dependent on others: it is clear that I am speaking of love'* . She remains good friends with her husband and also with

Voltaire, who dedicated a playful poem to her.

In October of the same year, the Treaty of Aachen put an end to eight years of battles, city sieges, and territorial shifts. To the great surprise of the inhabitants of the barrier cities in Flanders and Ostend, Louis XV ceded all these cities back to the Austrian Habsburgs. Many wondered why so much money was wasted on false conquests and, above all, why so many soldiers were killed for them. Others, however, pointed to the high taxes imposed only thirty years earlier to build apparently hastily neglected barrier fortifications.

Dieudonné considers this reckless policy a good illustration of the whims of occupying powers. He recalls what he heard about Marquis de Prié and the murder of Anneessens when he was in *Belgium Austriacum*. If the royal houses only see the world as a giant chessboard, Dieudonné thinks further, they would be better off deciding their conquests by simply playing chess against each other and sacrificing wooden or ivory pawns instead of flesh and blood pawns.

The Jesuits among his friends pointed out another less-discussed aspect of this treaty. Its signing confirmed the *Negro Asiento* for Great Britain. At the Treaty of Utrecht, British diplomats had demanded the *Asiento* to be transferred to England. In 1713, the Asiento Treaty stipulated that the English would be permitted to import a total of 144,000 slaves over the next thirty years, amounting to 4,800 units per year. The trade was initially controlled by the South Sea Company and then transferred to another British consortium. Many European traders resented the exclusivity at the time. Between 1739 and 1748, the Asiento was

suspended as a result of the illicit trade in South America, which brought Spain and Great Britain to a state of war. Dieudonné doesn't know whether the criticism voiced by his Catholic friends is related to the fact that the *Asiento* remains in the hands of an authority that doesn't recognise Rome, or because of the slave trade itself. Many talk about humanism and the appearance of cosmopolitanism. Meanwhile, those who call themselves humanists or cosmopolitans still see the Black population of this planet as a different species. Dieudonné is thinking not only of the Jesuits but also of figures like Sieur Voltaire.
Meanwhile, historians are receiving fascinating news from the Regno di Napoli. Following the discovery of Herculaneum, new excavations have begun on the other side of Vesuvius under the direction of King Charles VII of Naples. It is suspected that a buried city may also lie there. About a hundred years ago, remains of a settlement were discovered during the digging of a canal nearby.

In the spring of 1749, Dieudonné and Mathilde travel through the Austrian Low Countries. They visit a briefly Ghent, where they meet an Antwerp publisher who is eager to publish a Dutch edition of Mathilde's writings based on her correspondence with Emilie de Châtelet, Madame Geoffrin, and with Dieudonné when he was staying in La Flèche. They continue on to Oostende, where they witness firsthand the city's rapid reconstruction. They feel the strong sense of solidarity between the city's inhabitants and Empress Maria Theresa. Mathilde missed for the second time a meeting with Maria, who is staying in Leuven with Begga. With Johannes' help, both women were

able to peruse documents from the University Library. Mathilde would have liked to invite Maria and Begga to their home in Lille to see some of the *dinner*-conversations.

At the farewell, John takes Dieudonné aside. He tells him that his health isn't very good. He suffers from pressing, sometimes paralysing pains in his back and loins, and his urine often turns red. He suspects he's suffering from the same ailment that surgeon Boerhaave suffered from: bladder stones. He read from the surgeon that removing these stones is very dangerous. So he follows Boerhaave's instructions, drinks plenty of boiled water and tea, and takes frequent hot baths. His friends from Ghent have already confirmed that Boerhaave was right about the removals and that not much has changed in the last ten years. John concludes by saying that he is extremely happy to have seen his eldest son again at the age of seventy-one.

Dieudonné is terribly distraught but not really surprised when he learns by letter at the end of October that John has passed away. Mariana writes that he had just seen the new edition of their *Opus Omnia* with the final appendices, including their text about the Europeans' arrogant *Asiento* policy. She also writes that they needn't worry about her. She has the support of Maria, who now lives with her, and Johannes plans to return to Oostende with his family. A new urban expansion is underway, and Johannes wants to take advantage of this to buy land and build a house.

Shortly afterward, another, this time unexpected, message from Lunéville deeply affect Mathilde and Dieudonné. Émilie died shortly after giving birth to her daughter with Saint-Lambert.

She was just under 43 years old. Madame Geoffrin wrote to them that she was supported until the end by "her three men": Saint-Lambert, Voltaire, and the Marquis de Châtelet. Voltaire immediately promised to do everything he could to have her translation of Newton's work published. He also wanted to continue to ensure the posthumous publication of her other writings.

At first dinner after the news of Émilie's death, Mathilde reads a passage from a copy of Émilie's manuscript. It is provisionally titled *Discours sur le bonheur*. Madame de Châtelet writes in it: '*Whoever says wise says happy. It is clear that men, to be happy, need love study less than women. To be happy, men have infinitely more resources at their disposal that are completely denied to women. They can achieve glory in many ways. It is certain that their ambition to make their talents useful to their country and their fellow citizens, if not their skill in the art of warfare, government, or negotiation, far exceeds what can be expected from study alone. But women, by virtue of their condition as women, are excluded from any form of glory, and if by chance one is born among them with a sublime soul, then only study exists to console her. From everything else, they are condemned to exclusion by their condition as women*.'

The topic sparks considerable discussion among those present. Dieudonné argues that denying warfare as a means of achieving glory not only to women but also to men would be a good thing for humanity. And as for the rest? Can one assume that women govern less well than men, are less adept at negotiating than men? Reports from the Austrian Low Countries today praise the

Empress' methods of governing. History offers many examples of women with great leadership skills. Unfortunately, he hastens to add, this also applies to warfare.

Mathilde hears from Madame Geoffrin how the role of women is a key topic of conversation in her salon gatherings. She recounts how, after Madame de Tencin's death, she was able to attract many of his regular visitors to her own salon. Like her predecessor, she is more interested in science and literature than in grand celebrations.

Madame Geoffrin has another exciting news. The years-old idea to make a French translation of the *Cyclopædia* by Ephraim Chambers is developing into a larger project, and d'Alembert and Diderot are closely involved. Dieudonné asks for more details.

Meanwhile, the name Jean-Jacques Rousseau is on everyone's lips in the Paris salons. Is his response to an essay competition at the Dijon Academy, titled "*What contribution has the strengthened position of science and the arts made to the refinement of morals?* meant to be a provocation? Or is the man truly convinced that art and science only lead to moral decline? He is certainly acting very condescendingly. With the prize he wins for his *Discourse on Sciences and Arts* he suddenly seems to be the most talked about figure in France and beyond.

Child labour and Educational Fantasies

Dieudonné is now 43. Mathilde and he see the day approaching when Yann, in turn, will leave them. It seems to be a recurring pattern among the male family members. Yann

speaks of Paris, sometimes of the Austrian Netherlands. They tremble when he even mentions traveling to the other side of the ocean. But in 1750, he is still home.

In Lille, there's a lot going on around the canal linking the Haute Deûle and the Basse Deûle. As the city expanded over the last hundred years, a large portion of the river was diverted for the defensive walls. Narrow canals through the city regulate the flow of the Basse Deûle while powering watermills such as the *Countess' Mill* and the *Saint Pierre Mill*. But now there is again a navigable connection between the *Esplanade* and the *Porte de la Barre*. There are loud protests about this. Those who earn their living transporting cargo between Basse Deûle and Haute Deûle are angry. Even those who carry loads on their backs react angrily to any skipper who dares to use the connecting canal. It will take time to overcome ingrained habits and ignorance and reach an agreement among all urban freight carriers on the mode of transport and prices.
Mathilde is surprised that poor wretches prefer to carry loads on their backs rather than use sloops on the connecting canal. She is told that most of them cannot afford to buy or build a sloop. Meanwhile, she speaks once more during a *dinner* shame on the Spanish and English royal courts for continuing to view Black people as mere commodities. She informs her guests that there were Spanish objections to the *Asiento* clause in the Treaty of Aachen. The British then simply sold their privilege for 100,000 pounds.

The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle brought peace, but only to Europe from the Oder to the North Sea and from the Baltic Sea

to the major rivers in France. Locally, rivers, coastal waterways, and canals provided ideal connections for the supply of raw materials. A new type of production unit quickly emerged in northern France and the Low Countries.

The linen industry has long been an important activity in the region. It provides supplementary income for many farming families. Small farmers grow their own flax or buy it. Female family members spin the fibers. Adolescents and young men make linen from them. The more family members participate, the better. During the production months, children do not attend school. They are put to work. At four years old, they wind yarn, eight-year-old girls sit at the spinning wheel. Ten-year-old boys can work on the loom. Merchants and small business owners without direct agricultural income ensure the resale of the linen produced and live off the proceeds. Following the example of the smithies, these merchants transferred the production core to manufactories. The centralised supply and disposal yielded them greater profits. Home workshops disappeared as more people were placed in specialised workshops. This new form of textile production attracted many people. But those who came to the workshop were paid no more than those who worked in home industries. So, children also came to the workhouses. As lighting improves, the winter workdays lengthen. By the end of the decade, what was barely noticeable at the beginning becomes clear. Children of working-class families are going to school less and less. The poor are not much better off today than the Black people who are still being used as slaves in the overseas territories. They have the right to

their own bodies but hardly any means to feed them.

At the dinners at Mathilde and Dieudonné's, food is not a problem. One evening, *pomo d'oro* is on the menu. The conversation revolves around the monk who brought the fruit from Italy to northern France. The plant ended up in the vegetable garden of one of the abbeys in Lille. One of Dieudonné's friends did some research. In an illustrated Spanish travelogue, he found drawings of the plant with the small yellow fruits. The locals named it *xitomatl*. The guests find it a spicy fruits. Some discuss other ways to prepare them, and someone asks if they can be stewed with onions or shallots.
Mathilde goes to discuss it with her cook.
The conversation then turns to another current topic: the scarcity of charcoal despite the thirty-year-old restrictions imposed on the glass industry.
Dieudonné remembers that in Oostende, peat was also burned alongside charcoal. One of those present says that peat is also cut near Lille whenever possible. However, burning it produces much less heat. Of course, there is lignite and coal available today, but until recently, the supply along the Haute-Deûle was very irregular.
Another guest then explained that he visited Anzin because he was financially interested in the company of his friend Jean-Jacques Desandrouin. He started a project with Pierre Taffin, and today Anzin boasts a full-fledged extraction operation. Supplies to Lille are assured by the route along the Scarpe and Deûle rivers. The Compagnie de Anzin's goal is to establish permanent coal storage facilities in Lille and Dunquerque.

Dieudonné's guest explains that he learned a great deal from Desandrouin about the combustibility of mined materials. The harder, blacker, and drier they are, the better. That's why peat isn't interesting for industry. Lignite burns better, and coal even more so. Furthermore, bituminous coal, ash coal, and lean coal give off more heat than combustible coal or gas coal. Finally, there's the carbuncle that some call anthracite. For glass production, coal is more interesting than charcoal. Today, there's increasing demand for coal. The glassmaking industry in the *Rue de Princesse* for example, nowadays only coal imported from Anzin is used

Dear brother and sister,

I'm glad to hear you're all doing well. I can imagine it's difficult for our dear mother now that she has to go without her father. We're also happy to hear that Oostende is still being treated well by the Empress.

France is facing bills. Loans must be repaid, so taxes and levies are allocated to the central government. In Lille, people complain about the King's peculiar policy of first capturing cities only to relinquish them in the peace treaty. But perhaps it's better for the people there, all things considered, that Oostende and the Barrier Cities returned to Habsburg rule. Because, as we well know, poor central government always means higher expenditures for the cities.

Not long ago, I received a message from Edinburgh. David Hume has been working with a younger colleague, Adam Smith, for some time. They get along well, even though David is increasingly presenting himself as an agnostic. That's probably why he lost the chair in moral philosophy in Glasgow to Adam Smith. Both Hume and Smith say that Glasgow is freer and more open than

traditional Oxford. Yet, even there, there are apparently limits to tolerance, and don't even mention cosmopolitanism. I'm trying to find out more about this Adam Smith. He seems to strongly connect the desire for freedom of speech with freedom of enterprise. He's firmly convinced that when someone is doing well personally, the community as a whole benefits. I'm not so confident it's that simple. I think, as is often the case, that those who spend too much time in the academic, bourgeois, and aristocratic world tend to assume that humanity consists of distinct species not only according to geographical origin, but also according to descent. Their own little world quickly becomes the "whole community".
Yours affectionately Dieudonné

Dear brother,

Everywhere, people talk about human will, freedom, morality, and ethics. Yet, this doesn't protected Amo Afer who suddenly disappeared from academia a few years ago. Begga and I believe the Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel family showed less interest in Amo Afer's work, especially after he accepted his professorship in Jena. Meanwhile, we know full well that the idea of separating education from theology founded on Christianity is unwelcome. Not only Amo Afer, but other philosophers have faced harsh criticism. Consider Christian Wolff, an expert on Confucianism, who argues that knowledge and authority in ethics need not be obtained through Christian revelation, but can be achieved through reason. He can only continue to work because Frederick II of Prussia protects him, as we know from reliable sources. But things have gone wrong for Amo Afer in recent years. Ultimately, he was sent back to his homeland on a ship belonging to the Dutch West India Company. As far as we know, he lives today in Fort San Sebastian. We hear nothing more about him and fear he is being deliberately hushed up. If you do learn anything about him from kindred

spirits like David Hume, please don't hesitate to let us know.
Your affectionate Maria

"Is the *Res Publica Litteraria* something real, or is it just a fantasy in our heads?" eighteen-year-old Yann asks his parents on a summer evening without any visitors. Dieudonné and Mathilde look at him in surprise. While Mathilde smiles, Dieudonné gives a grin that makes him look ten years younger.
"I never quite figured out whether we think with the Flemish *Brieven* or *Letters* when we have to translate. *Res publica literaria* reminds me of a Literate Public or Republic, but I think the principle of cosmopolitan equality is better expressed if you see the Republic as a community of letter-writers," says Mathilde.
"That's your protective mother towards our friends and acquaintances in Paris, who like to see the personification of that Republic in their salons. Which, in my opinion, is false," Dieudonné interjects.
"False, because the salons are a French affair and not a world one?" asks Yann.
"Very well, son. Yes, that's one side of the story. Another is that most salons are held by the aristocracy, or by the ennobled bourgeoisie. And by women, towards whom members of the Republic have an ambivalent attitude. French philosophers and natural philosophers often don't see the salons as a place to debate ideas, but rather to posit their own theses without accepting contradictions," says Dieudonné.
"In Cirey, Émilie de Châtelet did try to facilitate debate. But she was often surrounded by arrogant male admirers, Voltaire in particular," Mathilde adds with a sad smile. "From what we're

told, Madame de Geoffrin now tries to keep debates civilised in her salon."

"But one thing is inevitable," Dieudonné notes. "In France, many are firmly convinced that Paris is the center of the thinking world. Perhaps that is why the outrage is that strong over Rousseau's *Discourse on Sciences and Arts*. By the way, I heard that he now lives with Thérèse Levasseur on Rue Platrière."

"Rousseau naturally stirred up trouble by saying that the progress of art, literature, and science is a serious enemy of morality. He claims that these activities breed needs and thus constitute a source of slavery. Furthermore, jealousy, fear, and distrust replace and undermine genuine friendship. This kind of argument even made him untenable with his atheist friend Diderot. And yet, his argument is sometimes reminiscent of the writings of François de La Mothe Le Vayer," Mathilde continues.

"He should engage more with philosophers outside Europe," Dieudonné thinks, "it would help him in his reflections on society."

"But to get back to your question. For me, the Republic of Letters is the collection of letters and publications that thinkers and interested parties send to each other and that we try to support in a modest way," Mathilde continues. "Your father has just subscribed to the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des arts et des métiers* where d'Alembert and Diderot finally began. A Herculean task, we think. From Madame de Geoffrin's salon we hear that it is a French response to the British *Cyclopædia* instead of a translation with some new entries as previously stated."

“I’m a moderate optimist,” says Dieudonné. “Jean d’Alembert writes in one of the preparatory letters about the contradictions he experiences as a philosopher between cosmopolitan and local identity. He is convinced that as a philosopher he must intervene in the surrounding world, including the non-academic world. Perhaps it won’t be long before we hear protests from the church. But I’m also somewhat cautious about the interpretation Le Rond d’Alembert gives to cosmopolitan. To my knowledge, he never spoke of Amo Afer in Prussia.”
“So it is better to continue to make room for magazines and lexicons from elsewhere in the world and not just from our regions,” Yann concludes with a laugh.

Shortly afterward, Mathilde and Yann have a conversation about the jealousy and perhaps also the unrest Émilie de Châtelet caused. Mathilde shows the copy of a letter from Madame du Deffand to Horace Walpole that she once managed to get her hands on. It reads, in part: *‘Imagine a tall, thin woman, with a flushed complexion, a sharp face, a pointed nose — that’s the face of the beautiful Emilie; a face she’s so pleased with that she spares nothing to flaunt it: curls, pompoms, gemstones, glassware — everything is in abundance; but because, despite nature, despite her luck, and despite her desire to be beautiful, she’s forced to indulge in the superfluous and to ignore the essentials, like shirts and other little things.*
She was born with enough courage; the desire to appear more than she is made her prefer the study of the most abstract sciences to pleasant knowledge: she thinks that this way she will have a greater reputation and certainly be superior to all women.

*She didn't limit herself to this. She wanted to be a princess. And she became one, not by the grace of God, nor of the king, but through her own ambition. Like others, we have grown accustomed to this ridiculousness. We see her in her theatrical role as a princess, and we have almost forgotten that she is a woman of rank. Madame works so carefully to show what she is not that we no longer know what she really is. Even her faults are not natural. We can sense them as the result of her pretensions, of her lack of respect for the condition of a princess, of her dryness regarding that of a scholar, her thoughtlessness regarding that of a beautiful woman. However famous Mme. Du Ch*** may be, she cannot be content unless she is celebrated. And this, after all, is what she achieved by becoming the declared friend of M. de Voltaire. It is he who gives her life its splendour, and to him she will owe her immortality'."*

"Well," Yann notes subtly, "I find it hard to imagine that such a 'letter' represents the ideal of the Literate Republic."

Mathilde and Dieudonné closely followed the frantic efforts to halt the encyclopedia project. They didn't have to wait long for this to happen for the first time. As early as February 1752, representatives from the Catholic community exerted pressure to have the work condemned and stopped. On the one hand, there was the suspicion that Diderot found in this work a means to spread his atheistic ideas; on the other, they extrapolated a commotion in the Sorbonne over Abbot Jean-Marie de Prades' thesis. If the information reaching Lille is correct, then de Prades argued that humanity, from its origins in its natural state, arrives at religion through the progression of knowledge, independent

of any supernatural light. According to de Prades, sense perceptions were the source from which all our reflections grow and were therefore the sole source of knowledge. Our experience of needing one another and seeing the value in it was supposed to form the sole foundation of our society. He turns the concept of justice into a simple, emotional reaction of the weak to the oppression of the strong. According to his opponents, this openly demonstrates his philosophical background, which makes him a contributor to the Encyclopedia. They argue that part of his dissertation is clearly based on the introduction to that same Encyclopedia.

From the controversy that contributed to the work's ban, Dieudonné and Mathilde deduce that the following reasoning is being applied: two figures, atheist and agnostic respectively, direct the composition of the work. They determine the choice of contributors. Consequently, the entire work undermines royal authority and encourages rebellion and independence. In doing so, the authors use obscure and ambiguous terms that lay the groundwork for error, moral corruption, disbelief, and impiety.

It is not surprising that, based on this negative criticism from the high clergy and the bourgeoisie, including from Jansenists, the Pope and the King decided to condemn and ban the encyclopedia.

Some time later, it was learned that Malesherbes, despite being charged with censoring all printed matter, strangely advocated for resuming the work. But after this negative period, d'Alembert reportedly confided to his circle of friends that he would only contribute to the mathematical articles.

In Lille, the streets remained unsettled. Shipper corporations don't exactly seem a good illustration of Smith's ideas, when he argues that what's good for the individual is also good for the community and that freedom of enterprise benefits everyone. The connection between the Haute and Basse Deûle rivers challenged the exclusivity of goods transport on certain routes, and riots between the various corporations regularly escalated. Meanwhile, the Compagnie Anzin succeeded in strengthening its grip on buyers of coal, lignite, and charcoal. The company wanted to get its products to users faster than before. Transport by cart was very slow, so the company wanted to establish depots. To serve Lille, it naturally intended to make intensive use of the Scarpe-Deûle connection. It used its own boats for this purpose. Three of these boats functioned as floating depots to quickly deliver where needed. All the skippers, including those on the Scheldt, opposed this. The latter reportedly even received military support. But in the end an agreement was reached, one hears on a *dinner*-around in Rue des Carmes.

The rest of the evening is dedicated to a message from Portugal. There, Prime Minister Sebastião José de Carvalho, Marquis of Pombal, banished all Jesuits from the country and its colonies. The Order was allegedly involved in an assassination attempt on the Portuguese king. The Order's assets were confiscated. And there may be another financial reason for that decision. In the *Colony of Brazil of the Kingdom of Portugal* the Society has 25 residences, 36 missions, and 17 colleges and seminaries. The residences generate considerable revenue. Dieudonné and Mathilde's guests view the residences as a form

of on-site adult education that has economic significance in itself. To own and exploit land, Europeans have long subjugated the local population, whom they call Indians. The occupiers force the Indians to forget their own culture and adopt European ones. Catechism and Christianisation are part of this subjugation. Jesuit missionaries practice the local language and dance. In this way, the Christian God can be presented with the necessary theatrics. They use a mixture of Portuguese and local language to introduce saints and angels. Often, the audience doesn't understand the message, but gradually, customs and rituals that can be called Christian are incorporated.

"I do wonder if we can even call this training," says Dieudonné. "This seems more like instruction and an obligation to accept a dogma, rather than a dissemination of knowledge."

Mathilde makes a mental leap and says: "Have you already read the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* from Jean-Jacques Rousseau? Our Genevan friend published this in response to the new competition from the Académie de Dijon: *"What is the origin of inequality between people and is it justified by natural law?"*

"What did you learn from his answer?" asks Pierre Lacour.

"Rousseau writes that natural inequality is beyond question, since we are inherently unequal," Mathilde begins. "He then goes on to say that political and moral inequality are not natural. As he argued earlier, the good inherent in savage man degrades. In our natural state, we naturally love ourselves and others. We want to see neither ourselves nor others suffer. Human reason ensures that in a natural state, everyone is a

Noble Savage."

Yann has recently also started participating in the *dinner* conversations. He's mainly trying to muster the courage to strike up a conversation with Madeleine Lacour and is glad he's taken his mother's suggestion to read Rousseau's text. Hesitantly, he begins: "I might have misunderstood, of course, but I think Rousseau assumes that we quickly come to consider certain goods or services convenient and normal. So we develop an artificial need for them. We want ivory because we find a comb convenient, we want iron and tin because we find a knife useful. Then we can no longer imagine life without these objects." He looks hesitantly at Mathilde, who nods encouragingly. He continues: "Ore mining and cultivating the land are therefore important. This makes owning ores and land a kind of compulsion, the compulsion for ownership. And therein lies the cause of our moral decline. Love becomes self-love. This is linked to our own actions and to the actions and opinions of others. We value others and allow ourselves to be valued based on their prestige. To maintain our self-love, we must show that we are possessors. And, I would add here, since we own land and mines, we need others to cultivate our possessions. Those who possess also want to own the labour of others, whether for payment or not."

"Can an owner own someone else's work? Can you force someone to work for someone else?" one of the table mates asks.

"Not only can it happen, but it happens all the time," says Yann. "You were talking during another dinner about parents who put children to work spinning and winding yarn. I heard stories

about workers who earn so little that they are forced to employ women and children. I heard from my father that the children of the poor often stay away from the little schools because their labour is needed. Just now you were talking about how the Indians of the *Colony of Brazil* forced to work anyway. The Europeans turned free men into their property as soon as they settled there." Yann blushes when he sees Madeleine looking at him admiringly and says shyly, "But perhaps I'm exaggerating here."

"I don't think you're exaggerating, you're just arguing a bit too forcefully," Dieudonné interjects. "I think the clear way Rousseau presents inequality helps us when we look at other texts."

Dieudonné looks at his friend Lacour. "Do you remember how I recently expressed my surprise at what David Hume writes in his *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*?"

"Yes," Pierre answers. You were so indignant about it that I think I can still quote it by heart: *'I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites'*. Rousseau could refute this mainly because of what follows: *'There never was a civilised nation of any other complexion than white, nor any individual eminent either in action or speculation*.' For to start, others could point him to the work of Amo Afer, which you've heard him mention. I think he's rehashing the slave trader's arguments. If the Negro is a naturally inferior species, then any Christian can safely claim to own a living being to work with, in addition to horses or oxen to pull carts and plows.

Mathilde then resumes: "We're talking about different forms of

ownership, I think. But those different forms do fit into the framework of my parents-in-law, John Lesmeister and Mathilde Grünen, in which they connect arrogance and ignorance. Someone can call someone else ignorant without admitting their own ignorance, simply because they're acting from a position of power. You can say of someone else that they're ignorant because they don't know Latin, or have never heard of your God, without accepting that the other person has a language, a culture, a conception of God, that you don't know yourself."

One of the friends from the Society of Jesus, who is sitting at the table, smiles and says, "Watch out, Mathilde, or you'll be locked up with those dangerous encyclopedia writers. But I understand your point. People sometimes confuse mastering a language with demonstrating education. May I tell you something about what's happening ten miles from Lille? In Dunquerque, learning French has been part of teacher training for almost twenty years. This is part of the effort to relegate the Flemish mother tongue of many children to second place. In Le Wast, administrators advocate for training "good teachers". Today, that means "French teachers". We know the relationship between scholasticism and poor education and college training... wait a minute, Dieudonné, I know what you think about scholasticism... that's why I want to talk about Alexandre Van de Walle. He's proposing a reform of the colleges in Wormhoudt. In addition to history and geography, Latin and French should be part of... Education there. And Flemish too, but, he adds, only in a serious way. And that's what it's about for me. If you don't want to increase the natural inequality Rousseau

mentioned with the inequality resulting from politics and property, you can't limit yourself to simply tolerating the culture of others; you must appreciate it and treat it equally. And that's what my fellow members of the Society in the *Colony of Brazil* certainly did not."

Mathilde quips: "If you continue like this, dear friend, we are in risk of being locked up together, but perhaps not in the same cell." Everyone laughs.

A friend who was there took advantage of the relaxation and said, "I have another example of how to cultivate self-love. You know the Duchess of Maine has passed away? Well, Louis-Antoine de Gontaut-Biron wasted no time. As soon as he learned that the Peyrenc de Moras heirs wanted to sell their property on Rue de Varenne, he bought it for the handsome sum of 500,000 pounds."

"Well, well," Dieudonné remarks. "The increased prestige Paris will give him after this will certainly benefit his self-love. And to satisfy my own self-love, may I offer you a coffee in the salon next door?" Everyone rises from the table, laughing.

It appears that Diderot and d'Alembert will be able to continue the Encyclopedia project. In 1754, the former wrote about cosmopolitanism: *'I am a cosmopolitan; that is, a citizen of the world. I prefer, says another, my family to myself, my fatherland to my family, humanity to my fatherland.'* The humanist d'Alembert continues to see the encyclopedia as the concretisation of the philosopher's obligation to engage with his surrounding world and to be sociable. He has been a junior member of the Royal Academy of Sciences for years and contributes at *Marquise de Duffand's* salon activities. He is now proposed as a member of

the Académie Française. Mathilde and Dieudonné believe d'Alembert deserves the honour. Yet, they clearly recognise that the Paris Salons remain meeting places for a limited group of writers, good orators, and their respective high-society audiences. D'Alembert explains it beautifully when he cites his frequent salon visits as proof that, as a philosopher, he doesn't shut himself off from the world, but otherwise, he mainly stays in his study. The non-hostile zone is rather small. In the salons, there's little room for craftsmen and artists, and none at all for the common people. They are well aware that here in Lille, their house is only open to everyone to a limited extent, even now that it has become a permanent guesthouse for a few young people since they once took in boys after the fire at the College. It's not enough to open the house when people simply don't have time to expand their own knowledge or that of others, and have to struggle daily to make ends meet with the little they earn during their long working hours.

News arrives from Oostende that Marianne is ill and rapidly deteriorating. Dieudonné immediately sends a letter back, announcing his departure for Oostende with Mathilde. Sadly, when they arrive on May 9th, Marianne has passed away two days earlier at the age of 71.

Yann and Madeleine also come over. They stay for a few weeks at Dieudonné's parents' house on Kaaistraat. During this time, they also see Johannes and Maria. Yann immediately gets along exceptionally well with his uncle and aunt. Both assure him that he and Madeleine are always welcome. The young people say, blushing, that they enjoy spending time together, but that it's too

early to make plans for the future. They don’t notice the tender smiles of the older people, who have already grasped what that future holds. Dieudonné and Maria agree with Johannes to renovate their childhood home without their brother having to intervene. The library will be preserved in its entirety. Maria will use the house whenever she's in Oostende. And Dieudonné finds it a sense of security for the family to have a place to stay if needed. After all, you never know what awaits you in the turmoil of Europe.

War drums

Last year, a massive earthquake in southern Europe destroyed much of Lisbon. Dieudonné and Mathilde would talk about it with their guests just a few years later when they saw Voltaire's lamentation of that event.

Yann, also known as Jan, and Madeleine, also known as Magdalena, decided to tell their respective parents what those had long known: they would continue their lives as a couple. In the autumn of 1756, the Lemaître-Larouge and Lacour-Lacour families celebrated this event together.

It's a cautious celebration. War drums are beating. Not only the citizens of Lille are worried. The political friction between the rulers of Austria and Prussia, but also between the kingdoms of France and Great Britain, is escalating into a new war, the beginning of which is visible but not the end. Quite quickly, the French Royal House and the Imperial House of Habsburg enter into an alliance of the sort *the enemies of my enemies are my friends* when the King of Prussia invades Saxony and the British crown confirms its support for Prussia.

Frederick II of Prussia systematically uses volunteer corps. In France, the Holy Roman Empire, and other territories ruled by the Habsburgs, conscripting soldiers for larger armies is a priority, and that is very expensive. Very soon, the Lemaître family will experience the heavy tax burden, just like the Oostende branch of the Lesmeisters. For the family itself, the difference from the previous conflict is that the current alliances do not place their residences in mutually hostile territory. Thus,

they can support each other if necessary. Correspondence between Dieudonné, Johannes, and Maria increases.

Dear brother,

The Prussian invasion of Saxony has only one consequence for Oostende for the time being. The Austrian soldiers stationed here had to depart for the Rhine region. The port of Oostende could not remain unprotected because of the alliance between George II and Frederick II to protect the Electorate of Hanover from other continental rulers. Therefore, a French regiment under the command of Hugo de la Motte was stationed here. We saw some English friends leave now that they are suddenly officially enemies, and all English ships had to leave the port. We also lost the postal service with Dover. That liner has been diverted to Vlissingen. Naturally, we feel the need to raise taxes to cover the costs of the war.

We're sending you an overview of the VOC (Dutch East India Company) regulations we've obtained. These apply to all colleges in the areas it controls. The church council sets the tone. You'll see that the influence of the religion on instruction doesn't differ much, whether Lutheran, Reformed, or Catholic. Maria recently remarked that if Jan Comenius were to ascend to heaven despite the Catholic pope, he might look with dismay on that school which deviates significantly from his ideal of being more educational and less punitive. Here are the ten regulations, originally for Mattau, but now, as far as we know, applicable in all occupied areas.

1. *The sub-regent ensures that all the boys are dressed, washed and combed before sunrise and then kneel for the morning prayer.*
2. *There is a prayer before and after each class.*
3. *Before and after lunch and dinner there are prayers and thanksgiving.*
4. *A chapter from the Bible should be read at supper.*

5. *The prayers and readings are given by the boys in turns.*
6. *No boy may go outside the college without the permission of the regent.*
7. *The sub-regent limits punishments to a beating.*
8. *Anyone who stays away longer than allowed will be punished by the regent.*
9. *Two students take turns supervising and inform the sub-regent who is not speaking* duytsch *or otherwise misbehaves.*
10. *The sub-regent ensures that the students keep their clothes clean and that the building is cleaned regularly.*

As you can see, the regulations only address discipline and Christianisation. We learned nothing about the content of the lessons. We suspect that here, too, the situation is not much different than in the schools our parents gathered information about.

Yours affectionately, Johannes.

Dear brother and sister,

I'm pleased to hear that Oostende has been spared the violence of war this time. In Lille, everything is calm. However, there is great pressure on young men to enlist as soldiers in the Royal Army. Many boys from the poorer urban population do so respond. They think this way they can secure a salary. We know from previous wars that this salary isn't always forthcoming. We can only hope that they will be given enough to avoid resorting to theft out of necessity wherever they are stationed. We know all too well how Catholic military leaders flout church commandments in wartime.

Thank you for the overview of the VOC regulations in the colleges in the overseas territories of the Seven United Provinces. Mathilde and I reviewed the texts of three 'Johns': Jan Komenský, Jean Baptiste La Salle, and Jean Jacques Rousseau. We focused on one specific aspect: religion in education. None of the three Johns

exclude God, but they do have different ways of viewing education, religion, and religious upbringing.

In our view, Jean Baptiste views education as instruction. Education is done Manu Militari, which is not unusual in Catholic orders concerned with raising children. From the rules, we understand that general obedience is paramount here. You obey your superior, tutor, teacher, or master, but also your lord, king, and above all, God. And that is so because God ordained the orders.

Jan Komenský seems to offer us a different approach to education in experiencing God. According to him, training for blind obedience isn't necessary. It has more to do with understanding one's place in the community. It seems to us that he assumes that the student who understands nature and the world will see God's work and His purpose for each person. While he does offer a particular interpretation of the universe in his textbooks for children and other illiterate learners — today we'll call them his encyclopedia —he operates more on the basis of explanation than instruction with its associated rewards and punishments.

We haven't yet fully understood how Jean-Jacques approaches religion in education. We understand from some of his letters that he has a rational approach to God, perhaps similar to Malebranche's. What seems important to us is his rejection of original sin. Its rejection would imply that the educator, in approaching the educational process, considers children inherently good. His criticism of Science and Art in his 'Discours' on this subject leads us to expect that his approach will be non-punitive, while also demonstrating concern for not leading children to ruin. Is his intention in this regard <u>not</u> to make Knowledge available to everyone? Or should it be, as Komenský also sees it? It's unclear.

While we recognise the merits of these thinkers, whom we might

even call pedagogues, we nevertheless find that linking religion to the education of Knowledge as such is more of an inhibiting than a promoting factor. And that, dear friends, we prefer to say in sourdine. We are not convinced that, even in the European Res publica litteraria *there is sufficient openness to think of secular schools for everyone instead of religiously driven schools that differ from class to class.*
We wrote to some of our most trusted correspondents about this. David Hume replied that he would send us a copy of his The Natural History of Religion. *We hope the book reaches us. Strictly politically, we are apparently enemies at the moment due to aristocratic and economic conflicts.*
Your affectionate brother Dieudonné.

Dieudonné and Mathilde apparently received David Hume's book. In a short reflection, they leave a few notes (1):

- David seems to assume that the experience of God is the result of the awakening of the human spirit and that this experience was initially polytheistic in nature. Therefore, the rise of monotheism would be more the result of competing powers.
- It seems very interesting to us that David argues that while monotheism can in principle be treated more rationally than superstitious polytheism, the problem is that monotheism slides more quickly into intolerance, hypocritical submission, and a kind of unnatural monastic virtue involving mortification, humiliation, and passive suffering.
- Doubt would teach us more than certainty. But doubt might also lead to one kind of superstition being replaced by

[1] We have found the following comments preserved in a legible state. Furthermore, based on fragments, we can fairly easily imagine what other considerations Dieudonné and Mathilde might have had.

another.

- If we follow David and his fellow thinkers, we can only conclude that polytheism is a common phenomenon in human history. Some Greek philosophers even consider polytheism an expression of the desire to explain everything that happens in nature.

  Why then do we cling so tightly to outdated theories instead of freeing ourselves from the belief in some kind of personified general universe builder?
- Interestingly, David considers that those who practice and apply art and science may or may not be theists — and that we cannot get a definitive answer to this. On the other hand, those who are ignorant and barbaric can almost certainly assume the role of idolater.

  When we think of relics and all the processions associated with them, are we dealing with theists or idolaters?
- David speaks of the oral traditions used to record historical data, which therefore come down to us distorted. He then argues that the philosopher's arduous task is to investigate the nature of the data, sometimes reaching a conclusion, sometimes not. This often leaves the ignorant unsatisfied, lacking Knowledge. We ourselves believe this can explain the superstitions observed even among rational theists.
- On the other hand, David gives us examples of what he calls polytheistic superstition. He concludes that polytheists and idolaters do not think of a perfect universe, but of a universe of imperfect beings, including the gods. So, one might say that generation or conception (*gerare*, *conceptio*) versus Creation

(*creatio*) can be argued. In this case, the idea of a perfect universe has been tainted by human action.

Wouldn't it be simpler to consider the universe as it is, without trying to ascribe to it a perfect or imperfect character, whether divine or human? Should we discuss cause and effect metaphysically and transcendentally, or is that discussion simply impossible?

- We can agree with David that both polytheism and monotheism have their drawbacks. But if we advocate cosmopolitanism, we believe ignorant polytheists are better placed to cooperate than ignorant monotheists, because the former are generally more tolerant. And we consider tolerance one of the first steps toward cosmopolitanism.

  In our view, David's illustration of the oracle at Delphi is a good example: *'When the oracle of Delphi was asked 'What rites or worship are most acceptable to the gods?', it replied: 'Those that are legally established in each city'.* We ourselves add here that this example shows that those who followed the oracle saw the gods in the image of men rather than men in the image of the gods, at least as far as their activities were concerned.
- We well understand David's reservations about some facets of Catholic dogma when he writes: *'Roman Catholics are a very learned sect; apart from the Church of England, no community can dispute their claim to be the most learned of all Christian churches. Yet, Averroes, the famous Arab, who had undoubtedly heard of Egyptian superstition, declares that of all religions, the most absurd and nonsensical is that whose adherents create their*

deity and then eat it.

I believe, indeed, that no doctrine in all of paganism would sound as ridiculous as this one about the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. It is so absurd that it defies all argument. Many amusing stories have been told about this, even by Catholic Christians themselves.'

- We feel the same as David when he says: '*We are so accustomed to the teachings of our Catholic brethren that we never wonder at them; however, in a future age it will probably be difficult to convince some nations that a human being could ever embrace such principles.*' But, unfortunately, we can say, we are almost certain, like him, that those nations of the future will likely have their own absurdities, to which others will implicitly agree, as long as ignorance is more widespread than the will to share and acquire knowledge.

In his treatise on the history of religion, Hume also discusses belief in the immaculate conception, saying: '*Rather than relinquish this propensity to adulation, religionists in all ages have involved themselves in the greatest absurdities and contradictions*.' Dieudonné chuckles at this passage, thinking of his parents' stories about Claudius Cardinalis. Perhaps Claudius would have considered Hume 'a nice chap'…

Mathilde adds that, insofar as she got to know Wolfgang and his conversation partners from texts left behind, the following would also have pleased them: '*Who can express the perfections of the Almighty? say the Mohammedans. Even the noblest of His works are but dust and rubbish compared to Him. How much*

more must human conception measure up to His infinite perfections? His smile and favour make men eternally happy; and the best way to obtain them for your sons is to cut off a small piece of skin, about half the width of a penny, from them while they are still babies.

The Roman Catholics, on the other hand, say: take two pieces of cloth about an inch and a half square, tie them together at the corners with two strings about sixteen inches long, throw this over your head and let one of the pieces of cloth lie on your chest and the other on your back, against your skin: there is no better secret for recommending yourself to the infinite Being who exists from eternity to eternity!…'

According to Mathilde, the major difficulty is that an ethical framework with a certain coercive, binding character quickly becomes not explained, but imposed. It's much easier to impose coercion than to foster solidarity. She recalls what she learned about the school textbook that's gaining popularity in the English-speaking colonies of America. *The New England Primer*, she reports, has been adopted by a growing number of printers in various cities over the past fifty years. The schoolbook is not very different from the books printed for religious purposes in Europe. The framing of the letter A, immediately sets the tone:

In Adam's Fall
We Sinned All

The textbook also contains questions. What follows seems to her a textbook example of male bias: '*Three jealous husbands, each with a wife, met on a riverbank. How are they to cross so that none of the wives is left in the company of one or two man unless*

her husband is also present?'
Mathilde sends that pearl of an incomplete puzzle in which a diophantine wolf, goat, and cabbage turn into jealous husbands to Maria and Begga. She then receives from Begga a transcript of an advertisement in an old *Amsterdam Saturday Newspaper* from December 2, 1726: *'It was notified that the schoolmaster, sexton and cantor's position of the Village and Lordship of Strijen, situated three hours from Dordrecht, is vacant: whoever is willing and able, at a salary of 180 guilders, plus other emoluments with free rent, who accepts it, above and beyond the school fees for many children, can address himself to the Judge there: The Schoolhouse is also very suitable for keeping boarders*.'
Begga notes that the compensation for the schoolmaster's work regards only two-thirds of this amount. The salary is made more attractive by a series of small payments for other services: ringing the bell, sacristan duties, maintaining the church clock, being a reader and cantor, collecting for funeral shrouds, and teaching poor children, including those without ties to the church. Begga concludes her letter with two observations. No one asks a schoolmaster to analyse problems, not even with wolves or jealous husbands. This is another example of a Little School where education for knowledge is not separated from religious education.

Yann and Madeleine returned to Lille a few months ago after a long visit to Maria and Johannes in Oostende. In February 1760, their son Jean-Jacques is born. The parents say they chose the name out of admiration for the other Jean-Jacques, whom they had already read extensively, and whose work they linked to the

mindset around arrogance and ignorance that Jan's grandparents had in their own time *Opus Omnia*. Jan likes to quote the following quip from Rousseau when discussing political ignorance: *'the true founder of civil society was he who first enclosed a plot of land, dared to say,* This is mine *and found sufficient fools who believed him. How many crimes, wars, massacres, misery, and horrors would humanity have been spared if someone had then uprooted the stakes and shouted to his fellow men: 'Do not listen to this deceiver; you are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to everyone and the earth to no one'.'* Jan speaks to his parents about Voltaire, who discusses the current war but who also wrote a poem a few years ago expressing his horror at the earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal. The poet remarks that almost all of history is a series of unnecessary atrocities. Mathilde thinks it's worth reading the poem aloud on a *dinner*:

O miserable mortals! O deplorable land!
O dreadful assemblage of all mortals!
Useless pain, eternal maintenance!
Deluded philosophers who cry: 'All is well',
Run, contemplate these dreadful ruins,
These debris, these shreds, these unfortunate ashes,
These women, these children piled on top of each other,
Under these broken marbles these scattered limbs;
One hundred thousand unfortunates that the earth devours,
Who, bloody, torn, and still palpitating,
Buried under their roofs, they end up without help
In the horror of torments their lamentable days!
To the half-formed cries of their expiring voices,

At the frightening sight of their smoking ashes,
Will you say: 'It is the effect of the eternal laws'
Who needs a free and good God to choose?
Will you say, seeing this pile of victims:
'God has taken revenge, their death is the price of their crimes?'
What crime, what fault have these children committed?
Crushed and bloody on the mother's breast?
Did Lisbon, which is no more, have more vices?
Than London, than Paris, plunged into delights?

This sparks a discussion about how Voltaire and Rousseau address the experience of God. One of the attendees suggests reading Candide. Voltaire recently wrote this text as a kind of response to Jean-Jacques Rousseau after the latter's reaction to the poem about Lisbon. Dieudonné also believes Hume's text on the history of religion is worth perusing. He cautions, however, that dogmatic church leaders label the two texts as heresy. Therefore, reading them is not recommended for anyone who fears expulsion from the church community.

The dinner party then discusses the progress of Diderot and D'Alembert's Encyclopedia. Seven volumes have already been printed, and Dieudonné proudly displays the copies in his library. Work has come to a standstill again since Pope Clement XIII condemned the encyclopedia last year and placed it on the Index. It was about a year ago that he ordered Catholics to burn the copies they had in their possession, under penalty of excommunication if they didn't. Apparently, D'Alembert had had enough. As far as we know, he abandoned the project. But Pierre Lacour reports that the texts for the next letters of the alphabet are still in the making. Dieudonné notes that, although

he believes this encyclopedia puts further into practice is the idea of Comenius *Omnes Omnia Omnino*, the Moravian himself might not have agreed with the content of some of the articles. But can Comenius be removed from his time and attributed to him considerations relevant to today? Perhaps that's a historical error, Mathilde thinks.

The struggle for land ownership between the European royal houses not only causes misery among the European population. British occupiers had long wanted to expel French occupiers from America. That seemed quite simple to them. After all, there are more than thirty times as many British colonists as French. But the regular *dinner* guests learn from a returning monk how the French are forging alliances with the local Indians. Initially, the British soldiers were unable to defeat the French and their allies. This was mainly because the Indians were more familiar with the area than the British and French stationed there.
But now, it is said, the situation has changed significantly. It is suspected that the French King is no longer interested in the possessions in North America. His Minister François de Choiseul is focusing all his attention on the European continent. The British King George II, on the other hand, sent Major General James Wolfe to the American theater. According to the latest reports, Wolfe was killed at the Battle of Quebec, but so was his French opponent. There are significant losses on both sides. Perhaps the end of the story is that the French King will abandon his possessions there.

It appears the kingdoms of Portugal and Spain are not involved in the current war. However, there is news from

Portugal regarding education policy. At Yann's request, friends of Dieudonné confirm that the Portuguese Prime Minister is rebuilding Lisbon as a modern city with wide streets.

Yann continues enthusiastically: "The Portuguese prime minister also has plans for education. He expelled the Jesuits from the country and intends to eliminate the influence of the Church from education. He reportedly wants to fully secularise education and use Portuguese as the language of instruction, including for teaching Latin. In doing so, he is reducing the number of years of primary education he adds to secondary education. Attention will be focused primarily on literary studies. These encompass the disciplines of Portuguese, Latin, rhetoric, poetry, and philosophy. The latter includes logic, morality, ethics, metaphysics, and theology. In later secondary education, you'll find civil and canon law, medicine and anatomy, Greek, Hebrew, French, Italian, physics, arithmetic, and geometry. All education would gradually take place in a free public school for the entire Portuguese population. His goal is to make the entire Portuguese society as literate as possible."

These seem like nice plans, but *dinner*-invitees doubt its feasibility. Some concede that this might lead to more young people entering secondary education, but according to others, fewer years of primary schooling would mean that poor young people would finish their education earlier. Perhaps the Portuguese bourgeoisie and nobility, like the rest of the European bourgeoisie, are not as enthusiastic about the idea of a universal and free school as Yann is. Moreover, it is learned that, just as plans for these reforms are finalised, Spain and Portugal

are suddenly entering the war. It is unclear whether this is to support their respective alliances or to expand their overseas territories.
The overall result is that European soldiers and occupiers continue to murder the indigenous population of the territories they occupy. Stories of this are gradually filtering into the port of Oostende. The British are said to have almost completely exterminated the indigenous Acadian population, and in the Indies, the local population suffered from brutal massacres organised by disgruntled, unpaid soldiers.
Most war fleets record high death tolls. Due to the long periods at sea, there is a complete shortage of well-preserved, let alone fresh, food. Scurvy and typhus kill those who aren't killed first in a naval battle.
In many places, there is discontent about the development of this senseless and pointless war, which is largely the result of the unchecked arrogance and excessive self-interest of a few princes and rulers. For example, it is now known that the peace negotiations were delayed by two years due to the sudden participation of the Portuguese and Spanish governments.

Only after the armistice of 1763 did the Lemaître, Larouge, and Lacour families see clearly how they escaped all that senseless violence. While the war had certainly caused them a significant financial drain, they escaped unscathed. Speechless, they learned that a total of one and a half million people had died in all the conflicts, and that at least half of these were unarmed civilians. Especially in the German provinces, unpaid and hungry French soldiers often wreaked havoc in villages and

towns. Moreover, the outcome of all this bloodshed established a kind of status quo in Europe. What was the purpose of it all then? According to Pierre Lacour, nothing, as, he adds, is the case with every war. The aristocrats redraw the maps, search for a way to repay debts to each other, often fail, and forget that, through their extreme arrogance, they themselves were the cause of their bankruptcy. Almost no one speaks of distraught foot soldiers, defeated villagers, and angry, grieving families. In the working-class neighbourhoods of Lille, every family mourns at least one deceased person. Many young men who enlisted for the pay died, while the survivors often suffered the consequences.

In Lille, the Lemaître family is struggling. The college has few students, and share income has plummeted. The Lesmeisters in Oostende are faring somewhat better. The Ostend Company is now truly on its last legs, but Johannes has followed his father's advice and gradually sold off all the Company's shares. He has invested the money in other activities, including entering into a partnership as a shipowner. This way, he also acquired an interest in local fish processing and sales.

Although Dieudonné and Mathilde are struggling, they don't want to leave Lille. They stay on Rue des Carmes with their two youngest sons. They do, however, support Yann and Madeleine, who are moving permanently to Oostende with five-year-old Jean-Jacques. Yann is thrilled to be able to browse his grandfather's library without restriction, and Madeleine is forging closer ties with Begga and Maria.

Dear parents,

We're well settled in what we call the grandparents' house. Little Jean-Jacques tells anyone who will listen that he lives in the MarianneJohn-house.

We recently received some interesting news from Edinburgh. I don't know if you heard about it from David Hume, so I'll share it with you. Four years ago, in the midst of those miserable war years, the tutor and preceptor Thomas Braidwood took on the challenge of teaching the deaf and mute son of a wine merchant to write. He succeeded, and now it turns out he's fully committed to teaching children who can't hear or speak to read and write. Perhaps it would be interesting to learn more about this.

Now that the war is over, Oostende is expanding rapidly. Almost daily, you see the Court's interest in making the city a major port. The Company officially no longer exists, but many ships still arrive with overseas goods. The city's expansion, however, has little impact on the school curriculum. Therefore, I have put Grandfather John's classroom back into use. As soon as we have more resources, I also want to dedicate myself to the education of fishermen's children. The school for the poor remains a sad affair.

We recently spoke with Uncle Johannes about the Portugal of the Marquis of Pombal. He thinks it's difficult to even contemplate a secular city school here at this time. Nevertheless, we'll discuss it with prominent citizens of the city as soon as we get the chance.

Your affectionate son

Dear children,

We're really glad you're adjusting so quickly to Oostende. How's Madeleine's Flemish going? And little Jean-Jacques'? Does he speak both languages yet? Knowing several vernacular languages is a big advantage these days. But make sure he also gets a good foundation in Latin. It will be useful if he pursues higher education

later.

Dear children, Jean-Jacques Rousseau is back. As you may already know, he published two more treatises last year: Émile ou De l'éducation *and* Du contrat social. *His work is causing quite a stir.* Du contrat Social *has thrown the entire political world into turmoil and* Emile *was criticised by the church. When we heard this, Mathilde and I read his two texts. We fully understand the whole fuss. He builds on Montesquieu's theses, but he's much more astute when he addresses class distinctions and property acquisition. In doing so, it is said, he deliberately undermines the legitimacy of royal power.* De l'éducation *we find interesting, but somewhat vague when it comes to working methods. He proposes a form of religion that the church considers incompatible with the Christian faith. As a result, his works were condemned, and Rousseau, already inclined to believe everyone is after him, left for an uncertain destination.*

What really bothers your mother and me is that even Rousseau, who isn't shy about challenging sacred cows, continues to give women a limited role. He pays almost less attention to women's education than Comenius. At least Comenius was convinced that girls needed a good education to be good, "knowledgeable" mothers. We wonder why Rousseau, but also others who call themselves innovative and humanists, cling to the idea that motherhood is incompatible with intellectual work. Wasn't Émilie a mother too? She even wrote scientific works thinking of her children. Many other women who could afford it financially or because of their position have also consistently demonstrated how they harmoniously connect the two worlds.

No, here we must agree with Maria and Begga — though neither has children — that the position of women is due to arrogant male misogyny and not to nature. It's rather odd that even literate men

continue to display such a condescending attitude toward women. We're thinking of that work you'll find in your grandfather's library De l'Égalité des deux sexes, discours physique et moral où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des préjugés [On the Equality of the Two Sexes, a physical and moral discourse where we see the importance of getting rid of prejudices]*, that was indeed written by a man. It was written by François Poulain de la Barre. It's remarkable how he, even then, almost a hundred years ago, linked prejudice and gender. Begga can tell you more about this. We suggest you educate Jean-Jacques Lemaître-Lacour so he can surpass Jean-Jacques Rousseau when it comes to women. But perhaps Rousseau's problem isn't just misogyny. David Hume is currently in Paris, working for British diplomacy. He's not kind to Monsieur Rousseau, whom he met personally and about whom he writes:* 'Rousseau is only interested in himself. He feels attacked by everything and everyone. He is a combination of pretentiousness, evil, vanity, and restlessness, with a touch of madness. Added to this are ingratitude and mendacity'.

But to return to the Social Contract. *We see the text as a treatise, or rather a pamphlet offered to the poor as a political countermovement against bourgeois society, which the rich use to protect their property. In doing so, they exercise power over the poor citizens. The powerful thus consider themselves the owners of the powerless, whom they regard as a kind of slave. We see this close to home, in the Compagnie Anzin, for example, but also in the factories that are opening in and around Lille today. The* Social Contract *may be a means to protect the poor from becoming tyrants or despots themselves.*

If you read Rousseau's work, you'll find ideas sometimes attributed to the governance of ancient Greek city-states, where free citizens supposedly made decisions together. In Rousseau's view, everyone is

a free citizen. One might wonder: including women?
We enclose herewith a copy of each of the treatises.
Your affectionate parents.

As soon as they receive the letter and the books from Lille, Jan and Madeleine begin reading Rousseau. They also look up Plato's texts in their grandparents' library, of which they find a good Latin translation. Naturally, both of them find the idea of the *Sovereign*, the popular assembly in which the entire people participates, an interesting idea. All citizens make the laws together. This legislative power is the active decision-maker. Thus, the State becomes the passive participant in this political entity. The difference with the existing monarchy is that in Rousseau's proposal, all participants in legislation are subjects, and all subjects are participants. Laws are made together and then collectively adhered to. In its purest form, one can speak of a kind of structure that guarantees individual freedom as long as the freedom of one individual does not enslave but rather strengthens the freedom of others. Rousseau himself says of this: *The point is to find a form of coexistence which, with complete common strength, defends the person and property of each partner, and in which each, in union with all, nevertheless obeys only himself and remains as free as before.'* Sometimes he really messes things up, Jan and Madeleine think. Would he like to give a different interpretation to Montesquieu? He himself after all provides his *'De l'esprit des lois'* three powers: the legislature, the judiciary, which governs matters related to human rights, and the executive, which governs matters related to civil law. These powers must be sufficiently separated so that one cannot

encroach on the other. This, in itself, is a radically different proposal than what is currently happening. Today, these three powers are in the hands of the Church and the King. Citizens have some form of representation in parliament or the States General, or whatever you call it, but that representation doesn't actually make decisions and certainly doesn't create laws to which everyone is subject. And by no means everyone has citizen status.

Parents and children exchange several letters about their reading.

Dieudonné writes: *'Not long ago, I was discussing my ideas with my brother after rereading the work I call 'the three Johns'. You can ask him if you like. I pointed out, among other things, the different interpretations of their proposals regarding education for knowledge and religious education and the connection between them. Of course, there's no such thing as a simple Reformation and a Counter-Reformation. We see even today that all church authorities, I would even say all religious authorities, are constantly concerned with controlling the education of the people. In doing so, the shortest route to instruction is often followed, I would even say to imposition, which is detrimental to the dissemination of knowledge. Moreover, the Little School is allowed to rely on ideas like of Démia and not to have a Comenian approach, let alone an approach to the general dissemination of knowledge. Knowledge and dogma intertwine. God and the saints quickly become master architects and jacks of all trades, including those for miracles and the fight against witchcraft and heresy. This certainly does not promote tolerance, let alone cosmopolitanism. Voltaire writes about this in his treatise on tolerance:* 'Superstition is to religion what astrology is to astronomy, the very crazy daughter of a very wise mother. These

two girls have long captivated the world'. *I can't help but point out that superstition and astrology are daughters of the mother, not sons of the father. Why not children? Why are the aforementioned lunatics girls?*

But I wanted to return to the Sovereign for a moment. I suddenly dreamed of a school where the teachers and the students are the Sovereign. Montesquieu's executive power would then be the available Knowledge, and the judicial power would be in the hands of the scholar who examines the extent to which the Sovereign and the available Knowledge work in harmony. If that principle could be applied in all schools, then all children would understand what personal freedom means, and that would naturally change working relationships considerably. Perhaps there is no fundamental difference in the Austrian Low Countries from what prevails here. As with us, there is often live-in staff. Is the couple who have served us so faithfully for so long truly free? They have served us for almost their entire lives. Is a hired coachman freer than a living-in coachman? Freer in their movements, freer in their work choices, freer in their income determination? We naturally feel obligated to care for our servants, and we will do so until their death. Does that make them freer or more dependent? They are certainly more dependent on us, but freer in the sense that they might not end up in prison later for begging or streetwalking. We hear that non-employed domestic and craft workers have little room to live. They have to work until death to support themselves if they have no other means. We know that there are families who have elderly or sick domestic workers admitted to adapted institutions at their own expense, but does that free them? As we did, they often provide for their children's education, but is that enough to give those children the opportunity to truly choose how they want to live their lives? Doesn't our concern for domestic workers and the poor stem from the fact that we are

owners, in Rousseau's sense of the word? Does that make us enemies of those who don't own? Sometimes I dream of a society in which everyone owns, or better yet, in which no one owns. Is such a society possible? What would my parents' frame about learning and arrogance look like in such a society?
Dear children, I fear. I fear that the first signs of increasing production of goods, due to the growing demand for goods, will ultimately make more people less free and poorer, instead of helping them attain the status of citizen. David Hume and Adam Smith are more optimistic. But it seems clear to me that they are thinking only of the European bourgeoisie, and that they do so because, like Voltaire, they classify people into different kinds. As I see it, this allows them to justify how one kind can become a citizen and another cannot. Is this the same reasoning as in the Indian Empire, where we hear that, according to local customs and culture, some belong by birth to the untouchable caste of slaves, while others belong to what we call aristocracy and bourgeoisie?
You'll probably get a better idea of this over time than I do. Mathilde, who read what I wrote here, says I should stop before I get too negative. So I'll stop here.

It is quite clear that Mathilde and Dieudonné often think in the margins. During the *dinner*-meetings, they criticise both the way religious leaders interfere with secular life and the way the monarchy and aristocracy generally treat the lower classes. During other topics, they express their abhorrence of war and slavery, and their conviction that effective general education can make everyone freer.
All in all, the house on Rue des Carmes is popular with Lille's intellectuals, but at the same time it is watched with some suspicion by those who suspect its residents of seditious

language and actions that offend the church and the king.

Between enlightenment and darkness

One of the consequences of the general war that raged for seven years in Europe, America, and the Indies was that the Magister-Auctor dynasty shifted its base of operations back to Oostende. Yann had become Jan permanently in 1765, after the small family settled in the former home of Dieudonné's parents. At home, the family still spoke French. Madeleine, however, was busy learning the local variety of Flemish. As is quite common among the middle class of *Belgium Austriacum* in Oostende friends and acquaintances of Jan and his family also use French and Flemish in their local varieties interchangeably. Scientists and students generally expand their language skills with Latin, English, and sometimes High German.

Printers edit in both French and Flemish. Many citizens find it advantageous to speak both languages.

Dieudonné has once more the occasion with Jan's move to *Belgium Austriacum* to visit Ghent. He visits printers' workshops and is given a glimpse into several works unknown in Lille. He discusses with Mathilde the possibility of publishing more texts, including a critical Bible story for young children, bearing in mind his own grandson and the grandchildren of several friends.

In Ghent, Dieudonné see the first confirmation of his fears regarding the increasing impoverishment of the population. He is particularly struck by the fact that factory owners are gradually turning orphanages and prisons into suppliers for the cheapest workers. Orphans are thus increasingly swapping work

schools for workshops. There, they work for starvation wages alongside convicted thieves who partially or completely exchange prison for such workhouses, where they typically perform forced labour. Permits from the city council, such as those issued to cotton printer Joos Clemmen, prove to Dieudonné that they are indeed aware that men were also being paid excessively low wages. The justification in the permit application stated that work would be provided to "*a number of about seventy women and children who otherwise would not have been able to earn their living*".

Once settled in Oostende, Jan settles into his grandfather's library. Some things aren't new to him, but he's still quite surprised by reading his grandparents' accounts. This reading forces him to question the supposed European humanism, especially when it concerns relationships with people and nations outside of Europe.

Jan decides to supplement the reports from the various cities about which John already had information, wherever possible, wherever he can obtain information. In both the Southern and Northern Low Countries, the ABC-books and the catechism remain the only textbooks in the Little School. All textbooks used must have the approval of the local church authorities. Over the past hundred years, the established lesson sequence has largely been preserved: letters are learned, then syllables, then words from edifying texts. What Ratke, Comenius, and also Manoel de Figueiredo proposed as a response to this questionable approach to learning to read is hardly accepted in the Little School. Only in the former Latin schools, now often

called colleges and more common in the North than the South, does pop up *Janua Linguarum Reserata* here and there.
Jan is very surprised that everyone simply assumes that learning letters precedes actual reading. Moreover, this often contradicts the practices of home teachers. He observes that in school teaching, structure is more important than the individual. The classroom teacher doesn't actually demonstrate what is written, but rather presents letters without placing them in context. As a home teacher, he knows that it's easier for a child to recognise a letter as part of a known, written, or illustrated word, just as it's easier to distinguish a color in a color palette or a craft item when it's placed within the activity. Only decades later would he learn about the phonics methods some school teachers were experimenting.

Madeleine strengthens her contacts with Jan's aunt Maria and with Begga de Bruges. The beguine recently celebrated her sixtieth birthday and is still an enthusiastic researcher on women and education. During a conversation at Madeleine and Jan's home, she puts into perspective what is seen as the positive influence of the Reformation on education. She describes, among other things, how Calvinists attack communities as soon as they suspect that they deviate too far from the Biblical story and the subordinate role of women. She even goes so far as to say that Pope Benedict XIV did more for women than those she labels as '*Protestant misogynists*'. Begga recalls that Benedict, both before and after becoming Pope, consistently defended women's place in science. He supported Laura Bassi, who, from 1733 onward, became a doctor of

philosophy and taught physics and mathematics at the University of Bologna. In 1748, he also supported Maria Agnesi, for whom a chair in mathematics was created at the same university through his efforts.

Jan writes to his mother about Begga de Bruges' visit and her radical opinions on the role of women in science. Mathilde subtly reminds him that she is the first to denounce misogyny, but that, in her proper view, misandry carries the same danger of prejudice, and continues: '*You know, dear son, how I feel about certain statements by Sieur Voltaire, but we mustn't forget that his relationship with Émilie was very important for Émilie to develop her natural talent. The long time Voltaire lived with her was absolutely necessary to give her the opportunity to make the natural philosophy and mathematics of England and Germany accessible to those who speak, read, and think in French. But many other men were important to Émilie and wanted to correspond with her. Through Maupertuis, she came into contact with the work of people like Leibniz, Clairaut, König, Bernoulli, and Réaumur. She learned and studied as a result of her interactions with other men such as Christian von Wolff, Leonhard Euler, and François Jacquier. To translate Principia Mathematica she contacted Buffon.*

Of course, I understand that you're delighted to find such interesting conversationalists in Maria and Begga. I think Émilie had the added benefit of being a mother. And as a woman and mother, she advised her son to take advantage of the time when he could truly immerse himself in science. She said: 'You are, my dear son, at that happy age when the mind begins to think, and in

which the heart does not yet have passions lively enough to trouble it. It is perhaps now the only time of your life that you will be able to give to the study of nature. Soon the passions and pleasures of your age will carry away all your moments; and when this youthful ardor is past, and you will have paid to the intoxication of the world the tribute of your age and your condition, ambition will take possession of your soul; and even if in this more advanced age, and which is often not more mature, you would like to apply yourself to the study of true sciences, your mind no longer having that flexibility which is the portion of the beautiful years, you would have to buy by painful study what you can learn today with extreme ease.' *Those seem to me to be wise words I didn't say to you but that were present in my and your father's minds whenever we encouraged you to learn more about what interested you as a child.*
I know Begga appreciates Aristophile. Ask her to quote the passage about the reason of angels and the reason of men in 'Du célibat volontaire, ou La vie sans engagement'. *Aristophile says that the angelic sense is contemplative, while the human sense is discursive, to demonstrate that people must have the time and opportunity to learn to use their senses to achieve knowledge. But she explains it much better than I can, since I know the work only superficially.*

Following in his parents' footsteps, Jan writes a chronicle denouncing how the high nobility and the clergy clung to privileges that full-fledged humanists could never agree to. In it, he explains how, in his view, power and ignorance coexist, both in the Protestant Seven United Provinces and in France and other Catholic countries.

He devotes a section of this essay to the abuses he observes in the manufactories, linen production, and the emerging coal mines. He points out that all the ideas of the enlightened humanists are aimed solely at the privileged class to which the vast majority of thinkers belong.

In another chapter he recounts the conversation he had with his father after reading Abbé de Fleury in *Traité du choix et de la méthode des études.*The book was first published in 1686, and a copy of it came into the family library through Claudius Cardinalis. In that treatise, Abbé de Fleury, discussing the way in which 'the true faith' is taught, says: '*Besides, there is a great difference between the mysteries that true Religion teaches us and the absurdities that false Religions propose. That the sun hides every day behind a mountain*'. Jan and Dieudonné point out that it's all too easy to forget that the Bible, in its recorded stories, is also full of impossible phenomena. Why should one religion be about metaphors — which, incidentally, cost the lives of those who labeled them as such at the time, when they were presented as truth — and another about absurdities? Why should our mystery be the true one and their mystery the false one? Dogma debates resemble, at best, yes-no arguments between ignorant children. Can't everyone simply experience their own religion without ridiculing or condemning that of others?

When does arrogance surpass humane interaction? Unfortunately, very quickly, even today, Jan argues. He raises the point that while Claudius Cardinalis appreciated Fleury for his thoughtful approach to evangelisation, life wasn't easy for anyone living as a

non-Christian in areas taken over by Christians nearly a hundred years ago. Fleury's thoughtfulness, Jan says, wasn't about choosing a religion, but simply about working more efficiently in the evangelisation process. And all the reservations about how to treat the children of the poor are, once again, the reservations of those who view the poor as a different species than the wealthy, and especially the aristocracy and the clergy that stem from it. After all, doesn't Fleury say that one must be very cautious about offering educational opportunities to poor children? But it doesn't stop there. Fleury separates the people of the sword from the people of the coat when it comes to education. Oddly enough, that might be more justified today than then, given the rapid pace of knowledge growth. And yet, Jan Lemaître wonders, isn't that the fundamental difference from what someone like Comenius advocated, who aimed to impart as much knowledge as possible to everyone, even knowing he never fully succeeded? No, Fleury may have been an interesting source of inspiration in Claudius' time, but it would be dangerous to follow his proposals today.

Jan foresees new, additional difficulties. What will the division of curriculum based on the background and destination of students lead to, especially now that mathematics and science are taking off so rapidly? When and how will Euler, Bernoulli, D'Alembert, and so many others, even if they *want* to explain their work *be able* to do so? How many Émilies de Châtelet will it take to translate and comment on scholarly works? And when will those Émilies finally appear from all classes?

In yet another chapter, Jan discusses his own view of cosmopolitanism. Here, he takes a particular stance against what

he sees as the narrowing role played not only by many French salonnières but also by prominent French encyclopaedists. In his view, some of them deviate from the spirit of the *Res publica litteraria* proposing a though incomplete, nevertheless more hopeful, cosmopolitanism. He recalls Diderot's words when he describes his sense of liberation experienced in the salon of Baron von Holbach: *'There one discusses history, politics, finance, literature, philosophy; there one is sufficiently esteemed to be able to contradict one another; there one finds the true cosmopolitan'*. Jan argues that he's not the only one who doubts whether the word 'cosmopolitan' can be used here. Diderot ultimately only cites a Parisian phenomenon. Moreover, a prudent estimate shows that more than half of the encyclopedia's work was compiled by people living in Paris. If you consider Paris and Versailles as a whole, you can practically count on one hand who lived outside of Paris and contributed to the encyclopedia. Does the encyclopedia represent such a limited view of what cosmopolitanism is?

How important is travel, Jan continues. He refers here, among other things, to the travels in his own family. It is said of grandfather John that he made a *little tour*. That was a gimmick by his well-read mother who, thinking of the '*Iter gallium*' and '*Iter allemannicum*' of the aristocracy of the time, gave her husband's tour the name '*Magnum Iter*' and came up with the name '*Modicum Iter*' for her son John's visit to the Low Countries. Unfortunately, it seems that today, even more than before, the great journeys to truly acquire knowledge are reserved only for the sons of the wealthy aristocracy and

bourgeoisie. This should raise our concern, writes Jan, if we are to consider the generalisation of access to knowledge. He recalls that Bacon wrote almost a century and a half ago in his Travel Essay that travel is a form of education for the young and a form of experience for the elderly. One had to travel accompanied by a teacher or servant who spoke the language of the country in order to be able to study things. Much is worth remembering: the courts of princes and the courts of justice, the ecclesiastical councils, the churches, the monasteries and their history, the ramparts and fortifications of cities, the ports, antiquities, libraries and universities, and many other things. This is what Bacon wrote. And, Jan continues, in the recently published volume of the Encyclopedia, Jaucourt writes under '*Voyage*': *'The great men of antiquity judged that there was no better school of life than that of travel, a school where one learns the diversity of so many other lives, where one constantly finds a new lesson in this great book of the world, and where the change of air and exercise is beneficial to body and mind.'*

But what is the experience today? What constitutes good credentials if you're not traveling to visit family or acquaintances? Who can provide them? Hospitality, food, and accommodation are often subject to whims. Money, toll booths, health certificates, and other control procedures are often obstacles. These certificates are, of course, intended to protect cities and ports from epidemics. Only recently, when his father was traveling, settling first in Paris and then with his mother in Lille, the plague outbreaks in Marseille and Messina caused major travel restrictions. If traveling is now more difficult than before for the

wealthy, it will soon become nothing more than a fantasy for the rest of the population.

In the Catholic *Belgium Austriacum* Jan doesn't obtain the *imprimatur* and the essay circulates clandestinely using the *Res publica litteraria*.

My dear son,

Apparently, you need to improve your writing skills. You can say a lot about what the great Lords don't want to hear, but you can't directly offend them. Perhaps you can still get your chronicle printed if you muster the will and the time to rewrite certain sections. On the other hand, the current version will gradually spread.

But be aware that anyone who criticises can be prosecuted. I heard from David Hume that he returned to England in the company of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. After his last works, he didn't feel safe even in Môtiers, where he had settled. Perhaps he was exaggerating a bit. According to Voltaire, the villagers had simply smashed windows. Anyway, Rousseau went to England with him.

I think this will end badly. Everyone who has contact with Jean-Jacques Rousseau claims he sees persecutors everywhere. According to Hume, he doesn't speak a word of English. That makes everything even more difficult. I've heard from mutual acquaintances that David is impressed by Rousseau's intellect, despite his criticism of some of his attitudes. We'll see.

Hume is said here to be very optimistic when he assumes that the debate about freedom (or free will) versus determinism mainly concerns ambiguous terms that everyone interprets in their own way. But he also notes that the debate is over 2,000 years old. Does he think that providing better definitions will suffice?

And speaking of ambiguity, the Jesuit Order is in dire straits. You know, they were banished from France here, after having also been

banned from Portugal. The Jansenists have finally gotten their justification. They've always accused the dogmatic Jesuit Order of destroying Port Royal. Of course, there's more to it than that. Power has gone to the Order's head, and many royal houses see them as a threat. The animosity in France against Pope Clement XIII, who heaps much praise on the Jesuits, certainly hasn't helped. As you know, the Order's members themselves are generally masters of argument. Some argue that the Order, which is accountable only to Rome, has a truly cosmopolitan approach and is therefore seen as a threat. I don't think that argument is valid. They simply give a different interpretation to the word cosmopolitanism, because I've rarely encountered a more dogmatic way of thinking than in that Order when it comes to confession of faith. For me, cosmopolitanism isn't limited to bringing together people from all over the world. I think it should be added that it's about bringing together people from all over the world who think differently and yet live in harmony. Even with my good Jesuit friends, I can't always gauge whether they truly accept this. Anyway. So La Flèche is no longer a Jesuit college, and here in Lille, the college I'm still affiliated with is no longer run by the Order.
Your loving father Dieudonné

About a year after this letter, Dieudonné learned that Jean-Jacques Rousseau had left England after a heated argument with David Hume. Hume had warned everyone that Rousseau was unstable. He already had before a major quarrel with Diderot, and there were also heated episodes with Thérèse. This time, Rousseau was furious because Walpole wrote a parody of his self-esteem. But Rousseau also made '*aimable David*' as he is known in the Parisian salons, the object of his anger after he rescued him from difficult papers, is the subject par excellence

in those same salons when Rousseau reappears in France in May 1767.

David Hume is said to have expressed surprise at Rousseau's finishing touches to his autobiography during his stay in England. He even remarked that no one knows himself less well than the proper Jean-Jacques. Rousseau later claimed to be so certain of Hume's betrayal that he had slapped him three times. Voltaire then mockingly remarked: *'Well, three slaps for providing shelter, that might have been a bit too much.'*

Dear parents,

We're doing well. Oostende continues to receive excellent treatment from the Empress. Nearly 5,000 people now live here, according to a census conducted earlier this year.

Although the major European powers tried in many ways to restrict our shipping capacity, they were unsuccessful. The city council received permission from the Empress to further develop the city, and two years ago, construction began on a new road to Weynendaele.

It's clear that many ships are loaded here with weapons from Liège. These weapons are headed for America to supply the rebels fighting British troops there. We regularly hear stories of ships being boarded by English pirates in the service of the British Crown shortly after leaving port.

We dedicate a great deal of time to Jean-Jacques' education. Since we believe the schools here in the city still leave much to be desired, we are responsible for his education ourselves. Grandfather John's library has become a place of work and study, not only for Jean-Jacques, but also for many other boys and girls, children of Ostend residents. At the urging of Uncle Johannes, who knows practically the entire city, more and more people are coming to visit us.

Madeleine and I agreed to supervise three groups. We work together with a couple who are friends of one of our cousins. We have stipulated that two of these groups also be open to fishermen's children, whom we teach free of charge. A group never contains more than 20 children. We teach the youngest children French, Flemish, and German. We use words and sounds to connect with the letters, and we are very proud that we manage to teach most children to read in less than a year.
We heard from a Spanish captain who had to enter the port to caulk the ship's rigging, the Jesuits were now also being banished in Spain, where the Order originated. There, too, their power and possessions in the colonies are a thorn in their side, and they are accused of being responsible for the recent uprising in Madrid.

Dear son, dear Madeleine,

Dieudonné and I are delighted with your educational work, in which you manage to bring together children from poor and wealthy families in John's library. I think your grandfather, Yanne, would be proud of you too. First, a little note that will please Madeleine. Whatever you may say about Jean-Jacques Rousseau, at his suggestion, he and Therese Levasseur did get married not long ago. He is now 56 and she 46, and it is said he is considering making Therese his sole heiress. He remains a strange figure, though. We now know that the author of Emile may have had children, but never wanted to acknowledge or raise them himself.
But I'm writing to you because I think a book by Gabriel Bonnot de Mably *might interest you. The work is called* Doutes proposés aux philosophes et aux économistes sur l'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques [Doubts proposed to philosophers and economists on the natural and essential order of political societies]. *In it, he argues, among other things, that he cannot accept that existing institutions, and land ownership in*

particular, are conform to the will of nature. He takes aim at the physiocrats in particular, stating that land ownership immediately results in disproportionate fortunes. And, he further argues, don't these disproportionate fortunes give rise to different and conflicting interests? Doesn't this disproportion lead to the vice of wealth, to poverty, to the brutalisation of minds, to the corruption of civil morals?

He rejects the equation of social order with physical order. Society, he says, consists of physical beings with moral qualities. Humans, however, are a mixture of the physical and the moral. A social institution does not exist because humans are animals that need to feed, but because humans are intelligent and sensitive. Culture enhances society; culture helps society progress. Society was not created for the flourishing of agriculture, Mably notes. Concern for justice and peace must be superior to the desire for wealth accumulation, he continues. Even if land ownership were more conducive to wealth accumulation than it actually is, community ownership should still be preferred. What is the purpose of greater abundance, Gabriel Mably asks, if that greater abundance leads people to be unjust and to arm themselves with violence and deceit to enrich themselves? Can anyone doubt that in a society where greed, vanity, and ambition are unknown, the least of the citizens would not be happier than the wealthiest owner of today? he asks. Gabriel Bonnot de Mably says today that he recognises that what he calls 'human prejudices' are too deeply rooted to restore natural equality and the community of property. However, he believes that land laws should limit the size of land ownership to restore some of that equality.

I told your father that nowadays the Jesuit general might not endorse that abbot's writings. I think the Order has fallen victim to its own ambition, arrogance, and desire to possess. Apparently, the

Order has also been banished from Naples, Sicily, and Parma. The list grows.
Your affectionate Mathilde

In France, just before the order's expulsion, Jean-Antoine-Nicola Caritat, later known as the Marquis of Condorcet, was first educated at home by a Jesuit and then studied at a Jesuit college because of his very devout mother. His first work on integral calculus, published in 1765 at the age of 22, led him to the Royal Academy of Sciences. Afterward, his teacher and friend of Le Rond D'Alembert introducing him to Voltaire and the economist Turgot, who worked for the Court.
Meanwhile, in 1772, the complete French encyclopedia was published, including the volumes containing the illustrations. This was the subject of fierce controversy. But even before that, there had been other temporary suspensions. Journals such as the recently founded *La Religion vengée ou Réfutation des auteurs impies* publish articles against the encyclopedia. Abraham Chaumeix also wrote his '*Legitimate prejudices against the encyclopedia and a treatise in refutation of this dictionary*'.
Dieudonné makes the ironic observation that cosmopolitanism implies being able to reason freely about the nature of things. But the term '*revenge*' insinuates that '*wicked*' is a swear word what to say the least makes sound strange the combination '*legitimised*' and '*prejudice*'. He himself continues to have reservations for other reasons about the cosmopolitan nature of those he calls the Philosophers of the Paris Salons. He writes to his son about this, and his son replies that he has read the entire Chapter XV of Voltaire's *Traité sur la Tolérance*. He often recalls

his grandparents' matrix in their *Opus Omnia*. He acknowledges the text's influence in 1792 when he rearranges that matrix after working on it with his mother.

The Anzin-Dunquerque waterway, passing through Lille, is now fully completed. This connection will have a major impact on the further expansion of businesses and factories that increasingly employ men, women, and children in appalling conditions for starvation wages. White slavery in a different form appears to be on the rise again in this part of Europe. While the school for poor children does exist, it is once again only a transit point to quickly develop a docile workforce in both France and *Belgium Austriacum*. The colleges of the Oratorians, and until 1773 also those of the Jesuits, only open their doors to those who can afford it. The latter maintain strict *Ordo domesticus* in force until papal decree suppresses the Society.

In the Seven United Provinces, schooling shows very little variation. Generally, parents have to pay tuition. Jan understands that it is the Church Council that usually sets the fees. For example, a child learning only spelling and reading usually pays three Dutch *stuivers*. For a child learning both reading and writing, that becomes four *stuivers*. For a child also learning arithmetic, the bill rises to six *stuivers*. Moving up to the next grade means higher tuition for the parents and more income for the teacher. The parish does pay the tuition of poor children and orphans. The teacher's role is limited. Besides reading and writing, he must teach the children Biblical history, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and parts of the Heidelberg Catechism. Writing requires ink and a quill, which is

the reason for the higher tuition. The teacher must be reimbursed for the ink, paper, and cutting of the quills.
The children sit in a classroom at desks on straight benches without backrests or simply on the floor. They are allowed to move around the room to be tested by the teacher and to ask for help from an older student. Typically, each child learns independently and at their own pace, and this is done aloud. The classes are large. Jan finds that in classes of up to a hundred children and with strict discipline, ultimately little more than instruction can be provided.

All in all, it's fair to say that with or without the guidelines of religious orders, the general school remains a place where most children receive very limited instruction. The actual education in knowledge and science remains the preserve of a small minority. You don't even need a Jesuit order for that.
But it is not for that reason that Clement XIV ultimately disbands the order. It is rather a case of arrogant display of power on both sides, with fatal consequences on both sides. The Papal States takes a hard line. The Jesuit general, also known as the *black pope*, disappears to the papal dungeons in Castel Sant'Angelo, where he is presumably tortured to death. Pope Clement will hear nothing more of his death because he was poisoned shortly after the Order's dissolution.

Jan receives another message from Scotland about Braidwood's work. He has dedicated himself entirely to educating deaf children. His school is now officially called *Braidwood's Academy for the Deaf and Dumb*. Students practice lipreading, and a kind of sign language has also been developed

to facilitate learning. Samuel Johnson, compiler of an English dictionary, wrote the following about his visit to the school: '*my visit to the schools in 1773 showed me one subject of philosophical curiosity to be found in Edinburgh, which no other city has to show; a college of the deaf and dumb, who are taught to speak, to read, to write, and to practise arithmetic, by a gentleman whose name is Braidwood. The number which attends him is, I think, about twelve, which he brings together into a little school, and instructs according to their several degrees of proficiency.*' Jan and Madeleine see this as an absolute ray of hope in the dark world of education for children.

In 1774, the Marquis de Condorcet took up the position of Inspector General of the Mint. He also began considering a new universal school policy. Meanwhile, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria introduced universal compulsory education for all children between the ages of six and twelve in the territories she governs. Jan and Madeleine try to learn more about its purpose. What role would religion play in this? Is compulsory education the gateway to dogmatic instruction? Or would children of poor backgrounds finally be able to acquire Knowledge? Will more women like Laura Bassi be given the opportunity to learn and teach? Will compulsory education keep another Caroline Herschel on the continent? Will more women like Marie Wollstonecraft have the opportunity to develop and develop here? Is this policy going further than in France, where women like Marie-Anne Pierrette Paulze, however valuable their contributions, are exclusively from the aristocracy? And what about the boys? Will more boys from poor backgrounds develop

and contribute to the growing knowledge and science?
And, Madeleine says in a slightly provocative tone, will better education lead more people to think differently about the transport of war materials that causes so much misery, especially when arrogant leaders talk about justified wars? Will more people, not just ship pilots and their crews, finally not only know that the triangular operations, in which weapons are shipped to West Africa, slaves to the Caribbean, and the proceeds of the plantations to Flanders, exist, but also question them?
There is much to be done to make humanity more humane.
Will school finally play a role in this?
Jan and Madeleine continue to dream about it and work for it.
And Jean-Jacques apparently plans to help them with this.

END OF BOOK 03

A strange letter

Dear Pascal

We are taking advantage of small glitches in the space-time continuum to allow you to become a saga of educators, pedagogues, and anthropogogues. The saga was first published in 122.15 (Holocene calendar), which corresponds to the year 2215 according to the calendar you use in the 21st century.

The dynasty spans 20 generations, from 1630 to 2222 in your era.
When we studied your century in preparation for the work, we found your name and your interest in dialogical learning. That is why we kindly ask you to further disseminate the documents we send whenever we get the chance.

You can rest assured. The glitch in the continuum will have no impact on the past or future of living people. Only documents can be sent through it.

On behalf of the team of writers,

Maria Liber

Delun Huang is interested in the history of the printed word and dialogue-based interaction. He is currently gathering information on Claudius Cardinalis and other critics regarding power in matters of faith.
Umut is interested in mythology and the influence that dogmatically bound power figures exert on the human mind.

In this third book of the Magister-Auctor saga, we follow the adventures of Dieudonné Lemaître and Mathilde Larouge, against the backdrop of the activities of the French salonnières and the writings of members of the informal *Res publica litteraria*. We meet some remarkable women active in the literary and scientific circles of the second half of the 17th century.
Meanwhile, the gap between rich and poor seems to be gradually widening. Among humanists, few are interested in domestic servants, women and children employed in factories, and the slaves on the plantations of European immigrants.